

The Bottom Line – John 12:44-50

Rob Willey, Coram Deo Bible Church

John 12:44-50. We're studying the Gospel of John that we may believe. Believe and live. That's the theme of the book, and that's the recurring theme of Jesus' public ministry. The first 12 chapters of John.

Which means the text at hand is the last of it. The *last* of his public ministry. At least in the Gospel of John. It's the last of his teaching and preaching before he sequesters himself with the 12, subjects himself to trials, and submits himself to the cross. This is it.

And in it, he basically gives us the bottom line of everything. The bottom line of what he taught and why he came. A summary of sorts to make sure we know it and take it to heart.

V44 – *And Jesus cried out and said, “Whoever believes in me, believes not in me but in him who sent me. [45] And whoever sees me sees him who sent me. [46] I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness.* (ESV)

We don't know exactly where Jesus said this, or to whom, only that it wasn't to the same people he addressed in v27-36. Because John tells us in v36 that Jesus *departed and hid himself from them*.

What we do know, is that he said it with conviction. Because John said in v44 – *Jesus cried out*. Indicating volume and conviction.

And the bottom line, is that . . .

Believing in Jesus is believing in God (v44)

Or trusting in Jesus is trusting in God. V44 again – *“Whoever believes in me, believes not in me but in him who sent me.”* Referring to God the Father. He was sent by God. Something he said about 20 *times* up to this point. And will say another 10 after this. All to emphasize his validity and authority in the face of doubters. Then *and* now. He was sent by God. That much is clear.

What's not so clear, is the first part of his statement. *“Whoever believes in me, believes not in me.”* Does Jesus *literally* mean that if we believe in him, we *don't* believe in him? That's what he said. *Whoever believes in me, believes not in me*. Has he lost his mind? Has he used so many words that he doesn't know what he's saying anymore? No?

Okay, maybe he's changing his tune. After telling us to believe in *him* all along, maybe he's telling us that what he really meant was God. *“Whoever believes in me, believes not in me but in him who sent me.”*

Maybe John 3:16 was a mix up. Maybe it's not belief in *Jesus* that results in eternal life, but belief in God. Or John 6:36 – *Whoever believes in me [Jesus said] shall never thirst*. Maybe he really meant God. Or John 11:25 – *Whoever believes in me . . . shall never die*. Maybe he's changing his tune.

Obviously not. That would be contradictory.

His statement in v44 – that *“whoever believes in me, believes not in me but in him who sent me”* – isn't meant to be literal or *exclusive* of believing in Jesus, it's simply an exaggerated way to be *inclusive*. To say that believing in Jesus is also believing in God.

Not because Jesus *is* God, though that's true, but because believing in one is believing in the other. That's what he's saying. Believing in the Son is believing in the Father. Both-and. As if he said – *“Whoever believes in me, believes not [only] in me but in him who sent me.”* That would be the explicit way of saying it.

But while that might clarify things, it also minimizes a major emphasis of his ministry and teaching. That he and the Father are *one*. That's why he says it so shockingly, I think.

• Because he and the Father are one

One. A unified whole. The very thing he says explicitly in John 10:30 – *“I and the Father are one.”* So of course believing in him is believing in the Father. Along with the Holy Spirit they comprise the godhead. The Trinity. Three distinct persons, and each fully God, but all sharing one essence to comprise a unified whole.

But here the emphasis is on the Son and the Father. To say that believing in one is believing in the other, because they *are* one.

Now, that also means that *failing* to believe in one is failing to believe in the other. Believing in Jesus is believing in God, and *failing* to believe in Jesus is failing to believe in God. You can't say that you believe in God, while *rejecting* Jesus. That's the implication.

And if that's not enough, **1 John 2:23** confirms it. *[23 No one who denies the Son has the Father [has him as their God; knows him; abides in him]. Whoever confesses the Son [believes in him] has the Father also.* It's a package deal. To know God, you have to know Jesus. To believe in God, you have to believe in Jesus. Saying otherwise, saying you believe in God but *not* Jesus, is like saying you believe in gravity but not falling. Fire, but not heat. The two go hand-in-hand. The two are one.

You know what that does? It exposes all the *false* religions in our world; religions that *ignore* Jesus, or say he's just a good man or great prophet. Not only that, but it debunks all the vague spirituality that *passes* for religion these days. All the God talk about the “the man above.” Or a “higher power.” Or a “force for good.”

Garbage. All of it. Because true belief is all or nothing. Believing in God means believing in Jesus. Just like believing in Jesus is believing in God. The one who sent him. Bottom line.

Second, the second bottom line here at the end of his public ministry, comes from v45 – *whoever sees me sees him who sents me*.

Just like *believing* in Jesus is believing in God . . .

Seeing Jesus is seeing God (v45)

Another implication of their oneness.

But in what sense? In what *sense* do we see God when we see Jesus? He can't mean that we see God's shape, or form, or substance. Because Jesus also said that *God is spirit*. John 4:24.

So it must refer to his attributes. And character. And glory. Like when we see the *holiness* of Jesus, we see the holiness of God. When we see the *love* of Jesus, we see the love of God. Same for his grace, and mercy, and justice, and wrath, and every other attribute.

It's like looking at a **majestic building** and "seeing" the mind of the architect. Though I'm not sure that the London Egg, means the architect is an egghead. But the analogy works. Seeing a building is "seeing" the architect.

Just like listening to Beethoven's 5th is "seeing" his creativity. Or studying Einstein's theory of relativity is "seeing" his genius.

Seeing Jesus is seeing God. From his attributes and character to his power and glory. Just like it says in **Hebrew 1:3a** – *He [Jesus] is the radiance of the glory of God [the visible manifestation of God's invisible power, and majesty, and beauty] and the exact imprint of his nature*. His essence.

And Colossians 1:15 says that Jesus *is the image of the invisible God*. The physical representation of God. Because **Colossians 2:9** says – *In him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily*.

So seeing Jesus is seeing God . . .

- **Because he's the perfect picture of God**

He *is* God, and he displays God.

Which is easier to see in *their* day, when Jesus walked the earth, than it is in ours. Because Jesus isn't here. Not in the flesh. So how do you see a picture that's invisible? You know. By seeing him with the eyes of our heart; seeing and sensing him spiritually. Understanding him with our mind. Reading of him in the Bible.

We see *Jesus* invisibly just like we see God invisibly. Through the manifestation of his work, and the revelation of his word. Bottom line. Seeing Jesus is seeing God.

Third, the third bottom line, is found in v46 – *I have come into the world as light [visible and shining], so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness*. Remain, indicating that's where we are *apart* from belief.

In other words . . .

- **Believing and seeing the Light is the way out of darkness (v46)**

The Light capital L. Because Jesus *is* light. He *came* as light because he *is* light. The *true light*; and the *light of life*, chapter 1 (v4, 9). The *light of the world*, chapter 8. The light that shines in the darkness and dispels it; overcomes it. (John 1:5) And the light that leads us *out of* the darkness. *Our* darkness.

But you have to believe. How many times have we heard that? *I have come into the world as light* [Jesus said], *so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness*. Why? Because believing is seeing. Believing is eye-opening. That's how it *works* in the spiritual

realm. That's how it works in God's design. We don't just see in order to believe, we believe in order to see.

Especially when it comes to Jesus. When we *believe* in him, when we *believe* in the Light, we *see* the light. The light of his truth. The light of his goodness. The light of his greatness. And power. And glory. All of which, provides a way out of our darkness.

The question is, what darkness? Well, first of all, **the darkness of sin**. My sin, your sin, all sin. Everything contrary to God that soils our life and darkens our soul. Entrenching us and trapping us in a dark *night* of the soul. No belief, no relief.

Same for **the darkness of fear**. The only way out of the paralyzing darkness of fear is to keep your eyes on Jesus. Look to Jesus. Trust Jesus. Otherwise *he who is in the world* will forever keep his hand on the switch and your soul in bondage. You have to believe and see. Believe and keep seeing.

And last is **the darkness of falsehood**. Half-truths and full lies that people buy into, because that's what seems right to them. Full lies like atheism and agnosticism; that say God either *doesn't* exist or we can't know for sure. And half-truths like deism, that says he exists but isn't *involved* in our world; doesn't really care. And that doesn't even touch all the false and heretical views about Jesus.

The darkness in which we lived, and the darkness in which most people remain, is all-pervasive. From sin and fear and falsehood, to loneliness, brokenness, and despair. It's hopeless, it's oppressive, and it's even Satanic.

That's what Paul said. **2 Corinthians 4:4**. Referring to those who are perishing in their darkness, he said – *[4 In their case the god of this world [Satan] has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God*. Apart from Christ we're in *darkness*, and apart from Christ we're blind.

But praise God, Jesus has *come into the world*, [and he's come] as light [righteousness, truth, hope; power, healing, love; the exact opposite of darkness], *so that whoever believes in [him] may not remain in darkness*. Bottom line.

And fourth, the final bottom line here at the end of his public ministry, comes from v47-50. *[47] If anyone hears my words and does not keep them [does not obey them and treasure them], I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world*.

Bottom line?

- **Jesus came to save, not judge (v47)**

Save, as in rescue us from the consequences of our sin. The consequences of eternal suffering and eternal separation in the darkness of hell. Praise God.

What he didn't do, was come to judge us. *I did not come to judge the world but to save the world*. (47b) He didn't come to condemn us even more; seal our fate in the darkness of sin even more. That's later. When he returns.

And that doesn't contradict what he said *earlier* about judging. Like in chapter 5 – *As I hear, I judge*. (30). Or chapter 8 – *My judgement is true*. (16) There, he's talking about judging between what people say. Here, he's talking about condemnation. To say that's not his purpose.

Instead, he came to save. He came to forgive. To cleanse us of all unrighteousness. Release us from all bondage. Spare us from all the consequences. Consequences we deserve. But God so loved us, that he gave his only Son to save us. Praise the Lord! Jesus saves!

But only if we believe. Because he said in v48 – *The one who rejects me and does not receive my words* [doesn't embrace them; doesn't believe them] has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day. Jesus didn't come to judge because we have already *have* a “judge.” His words.

- **We're judged by his words (v48)**

His *words* will determine our fate. His words will decide our destiny. His words will condemn our soul and pronounce our guilt. Based on whether we have accepted them or rejected them. Believed them or scorned them.

Words like John 3:7 – *You must be born again*. Must. Or **John 3:18a** – *Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already*. Judged already. And **John 5:24** – *Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life*.

We're judged by his words. Because if we reject *them*, we reject him. The two go hand-in-hand. *The one who rejects me* [v48] *and does not receive my words* [both-and] has a judge. So that on the last day, at The Great White Throne, it won't be subjective and it won't be uncertain. If we believe him and receive him, right now, we're safe. And always will be. If we don't, we're judged.

And the reason for that, the reason we're judged by his words, is . . .

- **Because he spoke with the authority of God (v49)**

That's the next part. We're judged by his words, because *his* words are *God's* words. *For I have not spoken on my own authority* [he says in v49], *but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment—what to say and what to speak*. And then, at the end of v50 – *“What I say, therefore, I say as the Father has told me.”*

The words of Jesus carry all the authority in the world. Because they're not just his, they're God's. God the Father's. Who *has* all the authority in the world.

And last, Jesus came to save, not judge . . .

- **That we might have eternal life (v50)**

Not eternal death but eternal life. The Father has given me a commandment, he said in v49 – *“And I know* [v50] *that his commandment is eternal life.”* The Father's commandment was for Jesus to offer life. To preach it and teach it with his *words*, and make it possible with his work. His life, and death, and resurrection.

So Jesus not only came to save us from darkness and eternal death, but to give us the light of eternal life. If, we see and believe.

Summary

Final words, before his final days. And the bottom line of his public ministry.

Prayer – God, we believe. Help our unbelief. Use these words to increase our belief, and solidify our belief, and awaken it in the first place. Open our eyes. Deliver us from darkness. Shine ever brighter. In Jesus' mighty name we believe, and in Jesus' mighty name we pray, amen.

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