

11:55 Now the Passover of the Jews was near, and many went up to Jerusalem out of the country before the Passover to purify themselves.

11:56 So they were seeking for Jesus, and were saying to one another as they stood in the temple, "What do you think; that He will not come to the feast at all?"

11:57 Now the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where He was, he was to report it, so that they might seize Him.

John once again establishes the time frame by placing it at the Feast of Passover. This is the third Passover he mentions. The first one (Jn. 2:13ff) took place during the overlap of Jesus' ministry with the ministry of John the Baptist. The second one was during Jesus' Galilean ministry (Jn. 6:3 ff.) when Jesus did not go to Jerusalem to celebrate. This would make Jesus' public ministry a little over two years (Carson, 424).

The law required ceremonial cleansing before Passover began in case someone was defiled during their travels (Num. 9:6ff). Due to the large number of people that would come to the feast, the time required for this took longer than usual, so many pilgrims made their way to Jerusalem early.

The Jews had already decided to kill Jesus (Jn. 11:53), and so they were continually seeking Him. They had also commanded that anyone who knew His whereabouts should turn Him in or they would be incriminated and face punishment themselves (Jn. 11:57). The question "What do you think; that He will not come to the feast at all?" in Greek assumed that He would not show up to the feast.

INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTER 12

Chapter 12 concludes Jesus' public ministry; Chapter 13 will begin the final discourses given to the disciples in the upper room which is followed by His suffering and death. Thus, this chapter contains Jesus' last words to the general public. John selects three events to wrap this section up: the anointing by Mary at Bethany, the triumphal entry into Jerusalem, and the visit of the Greeks. After these, there is an explanation as to why the masses don't believe and an appeal to put their faith in Him (Morris, 571).

Jesus Final week (John 12-19)

March 27 – April 3, 33_{AD}

Friday at dusk	Jesus arrives in Bethany	11:55-12:1
Saturday after dusk	Dinner with Lazarus	12:2-11
Sunday	Triumphal entry	12:12-20
Monday – Wednesday	Cursing fig tree, temple cleansing temple controversy, Olivet discourse	synoptic gospels
Thursday	Passover (begins Thurs evening), betrayal, arrest	13:1-18:11
Friday	Trials, crucifixion, burial	18:12-19:42

THE ANOINTING AT BETHANY

12:1 Jesus, therefore, six days before the Passover, came to Bethany where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead.

12:2 So they made Him a supper there, and Martha was serving; but Lazarus was one of those reclining at the table with Him.

12:3 Mary then took a pound of very costly perfume of pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

12:4 But Judas Iscariot, one of His disciples, who was intending to betray Him, said,

12:5 "Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and given to poor people?"

12:6 Now he said this, not because he was concerned about the poor, but because he was a thief, and as he had the money box, he used to pilfer what was put into it.

12:7 Therefore Jesus said, "Let her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of My burial.

12:8 "For you always have the poor with you, but you do not always have Me."

"Therefore" of verse 1 ties this section to what preceded. Jesus came back to the very town He had just left to go into hiding. Though Jesus was not trying to run headlong into death, He is moving into danger, not away from it. The gospel conveys very clearly that Jesus had come to die for men, so in the set plan of God Jesus arrived in Bethany where He would be delivered over to crucifixion.

Six days before the Passover in the year of our Lord's death was the Sabbath. The day began at dusk on Friday and ended at dusk on Saturday according to Jewish reckoning. Thus, Jesus must have arrived just after dusk on Friday, for He would have been breaking Sabbath law if He exceeded the distance permitted to travel on that day.

A dinner was made for Jesus, and Martha was serving while Lazarus was reclining with the guests. It is possible that this dinner (which is a word used for a meal at any time of the day) actually occurred on Saturday night (after the Sabbath had ended), not the night Jesus arrived (see the chronological discussion in the notes on John 13). In other words, it was after the Sabbath ended at dusk on Saturday that a large crowd gathered (Jn. 12:9-11). The next day was Sunday, the day that the triumphal entry began.

Martha took scented oil (pure nard, v. 3) that was normally poured on the head during festive occasions and poured it upon Jesus. John, as an eyewitness to the event, comments on how the whole house was filled with the fragrance. The amount used by Mary (about a pint), the quality (it was "pure", that is, undiluted), and type ("nard") of the perfume made this act quite costly. Nard, also known as spikenard, was derived from a plant that grows in the mountains of northern India and was red in color and sweetly scented (Kostenberger, 361). The fact that Mary poured it on Jesus' feet is probably to be taken as an act of humility (Morris, 576) and the recognition of His greatness. John the Baptist had said, "He who comes after me, the strap of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie" (Jn. 1:27). In the next chapter of John, Jesus washed the disciples' feet, which was considered a menial task done by the household

servant or hostess. Mary had done what the disciples failed to do, and even wiped the perfume off with her hair. In a Jewish context this is alarming since women never let their hair down in public, for it seemed to indicate loose morals (Morris, 577). Mary was not concerned about what others were thinking.

The response was indignation over the cost of the perfume, not only by Judas, but by others as well (Jn. 12:4; Mk. 14:4; Matt. 26:8). Three hundred denarii was about a year's wages for a laborer. Mary and her family were either wealthy or it was an heirloom passed down to them. Judas suggested it could be better spent by giving the proceeds to the poor, but it is clear that his real interest was that the money be put in the money box where it would be accessible for his own use, for he used to pilfer from the monies he was supposed to keep track of. The contrast between Mary's devotion and that of Judas is obvious. Mary gave a year's wages in worship; Judas would sell Jesus for 30 pieces of silver.

Jesus defends Mary, saying, "Let her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of My burial. For you always have the poor with you, but you do not always have Me." Clearly, Jesus' impending death is looming in His mind, but the wording is a bit difficult to figure out. It seems that Mary had already poured the perfume out, so in what sense was she to keep it for Jesus' burial? It is probable that the words include an ellipsis (an omission from a sentence that would complete or clarify what is meant). It could very well mean something like "Let her alone, [she did not sell it] so that she may keep it for the day of My burial." "According to Jesus, Mary had kept the perfume – unwittingly no doubt, but in the providence of God – for just this purpose: the anointing of Jesus' body in anticipation of His burial" (cf. 19:39-40; Kostenberger, 364). Without knowing what lay ahead, this had to be a strange comment for those who heard it, for no one ever prepared a body for burial before the person was dead.

Jesus then concludes that His presence and the events to take place are far more significant than feeding the poor; the Word was made flesh and was dwelling among them (Jn 1:14). The time where the presence of God in Christ, walking among man was almost over; the poor will always be present. Carson wisely comments, "social activism, even that which meets real needs, sometimes masks a spirit that knows nothing of worship and adoration" (Carson, 429).

NOTE: All four gospels mention an anointing of Jesus by a woman, though the details are different (see Mark 14:3-9; Matt. 26:6-13; Lk. 7:36-50). When all four accounts are compared, it becomes obvious that Luke is speaking of a different event, while those in Matthew, Mark, and John are the same. Matthew and Mark identify the house as that of Simon the leper, and though Mary is unnamed, they tell us that she also anointed Jesus' head. This doesn't contradict John but adds some detail that makes reading John more understandable; it is hard to imagine how such a large quantity of nard would just be poured on His feet. Secondly, John's comment helps us understand the other gospel accounts; in Matthew 26:12 and Mark 14:8 Jesus says that the perfume was poured over His *body* in anticipation of His burial; this is a strange way to speak of it if it was poured on His head alone. Lastly, the emphasis on where the perfume was poured is related to the theme that the authors are drawing out. Matthew and Mark speak of the pouring upon the head because they want to stress that Jesus is being anointed as king (the

triumphal entry into Jerusalem happens the next day). John emphasizes Mary's sense of unworthiness, so he focuses on the anointing and wiping of Jesus' feet with her hair. In John's scheme this contrasts with John 13 when Jesus washes the disciples' feet.

The biggest problem people have in trying to harmonize these three gospels is that in Matthew and Mark the event takes place *after* the triumphal entry; here it happens *before*. But this isn't a major problem since Mark and Matthew are fairly loose with their chronology and tend to order events according to particular topics. It is much easier to assume that Matthew and Mark are writing flashbacks than to see John as writing of an event that has not yet happened. In other words, John is giving the events in chronological sequence, whereas that is not the concern of the other writers. In spite of the differences in details, none provide the remotest hint of contradiction (Carson, 426).

THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY

12:9 The large crowd of the Jews then learned that He was there; and they came, not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might also see Lazarus, whom He raised from the dead.

12:10 But the chief priests planned to put Lazarus to death also;

12:11 because on account of him many of the Jews were going away and were believing in Jesus.

It is a short trip from Jerusalem to Bethany and once word got out that Jesus was there, a large crowd convened to see both Him and Lazarus. The fact that so many traveled from Jerusalem also indicates that the Sabbath was over, for travel that far was forbidden on the Sabbath. In other words, it is best to see this as Saturday night after the Sabbath had ended that day at dusk.

The effect on the high priests was immediate. They now sought to kill Lazarus as well. "This seems a strange desire since death had not been able to hold him in the face of Jesus' command. . . It is interesting to reflect on what Caiaphas had said, 'it is expedient for you that one man should die for the people' (Jn. 11:50). But one was not enough. Now it had to be two. Thus does evil grow" (Morris, 582).

12:12 On the next day the large crowd who had come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem,

12:13 took the branches of the palm trees and went out to meet Him, and began to shout, "Hosanna! BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD, even the King of Israel."

12:14 Jesus, finding a young donkey, sat on it; as it is written,

12:15 "FEAR NOT, DAUGHTER OF ZION; BEHOLD, YOUR KING IS COMING, SEATED ON A DONKEY'S COLT."

12:16 These things His disciples did not understand at the first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things were written of Him, and that they had done these things to Him.

12:17 So the people, who were with Him when He called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead, continued to testify about Him.

12:18 For this reason also the people went and met Him, because they heard that He had performed this sign.

12:19 So the Pharisees said to one another, "You see that you are not doing any good; look, the world has gone after Him."

The triumphal entry is found in all four gospels (Matt. 21:1-11, 14-17; Mk. 11:1-11; Lk. 19:29-44; Jn. 12:12-19). This is Sunday preceding the Passover.

Historically, the triumphal entry occurs with Jesus entering Jerusalem with a price on His head. He had already been condemned by the Sanhedrin as a criminal who concluded that He had to die to save the nation from intervention by Rome (Jn. 11:48-50). Theologically, the triumphal entry fulfills prophecy. Humanly speaking, it is part of the sad story of humanity; the same crowd who are laying palm branches before Him and proclaiming Him as the One who comes in the name of the Lord will be yelling, "Crucify Him!" a few days later. It is likely that John saw Jesus' triumphal ministry as the last event in Jesus' public ministry.

The crowd in this section of narrative includes three kinds of people: those who had assembled at Bethany to see Jesus and Lazarus, those who came from Jerusalem who had arrived early for the feast, and those who were Greeks.

The events of that place are the catalyst for what follows, and John very cleverly introduces this in the description of what happened. John is the only gospel writer who specifically mentions that the crowd had *palm* branches. In Jesus' time palm branches had become a national (if not nationalistic) symbol (See Kostenberger, 369 for details). The waving of palm branches was comparable to waving a national flag and was the signal that the people were expressing their messianic hopes that Jesus, the Messiah, had come to deliver them from the bondage of Rome. This is explicit in their chanting, "Hosanna! BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD, *even the King of Israel.*" Professing someone as king was something that should never be said publicly if you were a Jew. This is the reason that John includes these elements in the gospel for it was also the problem. In Chapter 11 the leaders had specifically feared this; they said, "If we let Him go on like this, *all men will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation*" (Jn 11:48). The Pharisees needed to act soon, for His popularity had now reached the peak that they had dreaded might happen. Their comment in John 11:48 that all *might* believe in Him has become "look, the world *has* gone after Him." Within a few chapters in John, Jesus will be tried for treason. Pilate will ask Him "Are You the King of the Jews?" (Jn. 18:3).

Thus, Jesus' entry into Jerusalem was an expression of great nationalistic fervor, and it appears to be an acceptance by the people that Jesus is the Messiah. Furthermore, Jesus' riding on a colt expressed His willingness to become their king. As it turns out, this gave Jesus a little space, for the Jewish leaders would not arrest Him for fear of the crowds.

Jesus' choice of a donkey instead of a war-horse invokes images of a humble king coming in peace (Kostenberger, 371). Daughter of Zion is a way of referring to Jerusalem and its people, especially in their lowly state as the oppressed people of God (Kostenberger, 371).

But in verse 16 it says that the disciples didn't understand this until Jesus had been crucified, raised, and was glorified (seated at the Father's right hand). Later, the importance of His coming came to light. Jesus was fulfilling Zechariah 9 which says,

9 Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout in triumph, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; He is just and endowed with salvation, Humble, and mounted on a donkey, Even on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

10 And He will speak peace to the nations; And His dominion will be from sea to sea, And from the River to the ends of the earth.

11 As for you also, because of the blood of My covenant with you, I have set your prisoners free from the waterless pit.

Thus, it dawns on the disciples that these are not distant words, irrelevant to their lives, but what they had seen was fulfilled in that day.

With Jesus' royal entry, the Messiah has been revealed in Jerusalem. What was needed now was not more instruction but action (Schlatter 1948: 267). The raising of Lazarus (ch. 11), the anointing at Bethany (12:1-11), and Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem (12:12-19) mark a transition from Jesus' public ministry to the Jews to His private ministry to the disciples and His passion. In this context, the coming of some Greeks to Jesus (12:2—36) closes the gap, serving notice that the Jewish nation had turned their back on Jesus, while the gentile mission was imminent (Kostenberger, 374).

THE GREEKS

12:20 Now there were some Greeks among those who were going up to worship at the feast;

12:21 these then came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and began to ask him, saying, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus."

12:22 Philip came and told Andrew; Andrew and Philip came and told Jesus.

12:23 And Jesus answered them, saying, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified."

"The Greeks who request to see Jesus not only represent 'the whole world', but stand in contrast to the Pharisees who are exasperated by Jesus' growing influence" (Carson, 435). The "Greeks" referred to gentiles who had come from the Greek-speaking world. That they were God fearing is implied by the fact that they had gone up to worship at the feast. Such people were forbidden from entering into the inner courts. Warning notices were placed on the barrier ('the dividing wall of hostility' Eph. 2:14) that separated the inner court and the court of the gentiles.

Why they wanted to see Jesus is unclear. We don't know whether Jesus responded to their request or not, but He interprets the event as meaning that "the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified." This hour is the hour of His glory, but includes His suffering, death, resurrection and exaltation. Until now, Jesus' hour has always been spoken of in future tense (Jn. 2:4; 7:30; 8:20; cf. 7:6, 8). Now Jesus' hour is said to be upon Him (Jn. 12:27; 13:1; 16:32; 17:1).

Morris is probably correct in his assumption that the coming of the Gentiles signals that the gentiles will be included in God's saving purposes on the other side of the crucifixion (592). Kostenberger suggests the same thing and even entitles this section "The Dawning Age of the Gentiles." He says that mention of the Greeks may even be connected to Isaiah 42:4 and 49:6 which speak of the gentiles coming to God in the end times (Kostenberger, 375, 377).

12:24 "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.

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

12:26 "If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him.

Verse 24 explains that the way to glorification (v. 23) is death.

"The grain of wheat introduces us to a paradox, namely, that the way to fruitfulness lies through death. Unless the grain of wheat falls into the ground and 'dies' it will not bear fruit. It is only through 'death' that its potentiality for fruitfulness becomes actual. This is a general truth. But it refers particularly to the Lord Himself" (Morris, 393). Jesus must die to bear fruit.

"The application of the analogy from the grain of wheat is made plain. The man who loves his life loses it. . . John means us to understand that loving the life is a self-defeating process. It destroys the very life it seeks to retain. . . The man whose priorities are right has such a love for the things of God that it makes all interest in the affairs of this life appear by comparison as hatred" (Morris, 393). This man will keep his life to the age to come. If Jesus were to love His life above the will of God, He would lose everything He came to achieve.

The outcome of hating one's life is service to Christ. The servant must follow Jesus and serve Him alone (v. 26). The imperative, "Let him follow Me", carries within itself the double implications of peril and reward (Kostenberger, 379). But with it is also the precious promise that all who serve Christ will be honored by the Father.

12:27 "Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour.

12:28 "Father, glorify Your name." Then a voice came out of heaven: "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again."

12:29 So the crowd of people who stood by and heard it were saying that it had thundered; others were saying, "An angel has spoken to Him."

12:30 Jesus answered and said, "This voice has not come for My sake, but for your sakes.

"The present section illustrates 'God's strength made perfect in weakness' presenting the combined humiliation and glory of the earthly life of Jesus, both of which were to be consummated together at the cross" (Kostenberger, 380). Jesus' death is both the road to His glorification and the source of His troubled spirit (cf. Matt. 26:38; Heb. 5:7). The words "shall I say" (subjunctive mood) and the strong adversative "but" (alla) show that it is hypothetical, not an actual prayer. Jesus' response to this suggestion is "Father, glorify your name." This was the motivation behind all that Jesus did (7:18; 8:29, 49-50). The One who does not do His own will, but performs the will of the One who sent Him – even to death on a cross- is the One who glorifies the Father (Carson, 440).

This is the third time in Jesus' ministry when the Father's voice expresses the favor He holds in Christ and attests to Jesus' identity (Matt 3:17 and 17:5 are the other two). God's words confirm that He has done all that the Father has willed, His name has been glorified, and He will glorify it again.

Jesus didn't need to hear the voice; the people need to hear it, but tragically the response of the crowd varied. Some thought it was an angel, others thought it had thundered (cf. I Sam. 12:18; II Sam. 22:14; Job 37:5; Exo. 19:16, 19).

12: 31 "Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out.

12:32 "And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself."

12:33 But He was saying this to indicate the kind of death by which He was to die.

The hour of Jesus' death is also the hour of spiritual victory. Jesus' death is the means by which judgment of the world will take place, and the ruler of the world will be cast out.

"As the light of the world, Jesus forces a division between those whose evil deeds are exposed by His brilliance, and those whose deeds prompt them to embrace the light in order for them to testify that what they have done 'has been done through God' (3:19-21). Similarly here: Jesus' passion/glorification draws people to Himself but also constitutes judgment on this world, all of human society in rebellion against its creator" (Carson, 443).

At the cross the ruler of this world will also be cast out. Similar expressions are used of Satan elsewhere (Matt. 4:8-9; II Cor. 4:4; Eph. 2:2; 6:12).

Paul said in Colossians 2:

13 When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions,
 14 having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.
 15 When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him.

There are two meanings behind the words "lifting up:" Jesus will be lifted up on the cross (Jn. 3:14-15) and He will also be lifted up in glory. The ambiguity is purposeful.

12:34 *The crowd then answered Him, "We have heard out of the Law that the Christ is to remain forever; and how can You say, 'The Son of Man must be lifted up'? Who is this Son of Man?"*

12:35 *So Jesus said to them, "For a little while longer the Light is among you. Walk while you have the Light, so that darkness will not overtake you; he who walks in the darkness does not know where he goes.*

12:36 *"While you have the Light, believe in the Light, so that you may become sons of Light." These things Jesus spoke, and He went away and hid Himself from them.*

The crowds had heard Jesus refer to Himself as the Son of Man (v. 23). They had also heard Jesus speak of His lifting up and glorification. This forms the basis of their question: "We have heard out of the Law that the Christ is to remain forever; and how can You say, 'The Son of Man must be lifted up'? Who is this Son of Man?" In other words, the Jews were perplexed about what kind of Son of Man (messiah) Jesus was talking about. Their understanding was that the Christ would remain forever (a fact found in the OT -Psa. 61:6-7; 89:3-4, 35-37; Isa. 9:7; Ezek. 37:25; Dan. 2:44; 7:13-14), but Jesus is speaking of a Son of Man who would be lifted up.

Jesus refuses to answer their question, but the readers of John know what the answer is. Jesus *is* the Son of Man and the Son of Man *will* remain forever, but this comes about through His glorification which is achieved through the suffering and death on the cross.

Jesus does not answer, but directs them to the urgency of responding to the light they have while it is still available. They need to accept the light that shines in front of them and abandon all messianic preconceptions lest the darkness overpower them (Carson, 446). Men must believe in the light they see so that they may become Sons of the Light.

THE THEOLOGY OF UNBELIEF 12:37 -50**THE TESTIMONY OF PROPHECY 12:37-43**

12:37 But though He had performed so many signs before them, yet they were not believing in Him.

12:38 This was to fulfill the word of Isaiah the prophet which he spoke: "LORD, WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR REPORT? AND TO WHOM HAS THE ARM OF THE LORD BEEN REVEALED?"

12:39 For this reason they could not believe, for Isaiah said again,

12:40 "HE HAS BLINDED THEIR EYES AND HE HARDENED THEIR HEART, SO THAT THEY WOULD NOT SEE WITH THEIR EYES AND PERCEIVE WITH THEIR HEART, AND BE CONVERTED AND I HEAL THEM."

12:41 These things Isaiah said because he saw His glory, and he spoke of Him.

12:42 Nevertheless many even of the rulers believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they were not confessing Him, for fear that they would be put out of the synagogue;

12:43 for they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God.

The nature of unbelief is a theme of the gospel, and John brings this out one more time before his section on Jesus' public ministry closes.

John first points to the evidence they had: Jesus had performed many signs before them. A sign is not simply a display of power "The event may pass into history but the abiding meaning does not" (Morris, 603). The perfect participle "had done" emphasizes this permanent character of the sign. "John is drawing attention to the continuing quality of the actions of Jesus, a quality which ought to have induced faith" (Morris, 603). They were no different than their ancestors. Deuteronomy 29:2-4 says, "You have seen all that the LORD did before your eyes in the land of Egypt to Pharaoh and all his servants and all his land; the great trials which your eyes have seen, those great signs and wonders. Yet to this day the LORD has not given you a heart to know, nor eyes to see, nor ears to hear."

On numerous occasions Jesus had said that God is the one who draws men to Himself so that they can believe. Verse 38 traces the cause of their unbelief to OT prophecy. The prophecy cited in verse 38 is Isaiah 53:1. It speaks of the failure to believe and the arm of God; faith and divine activity are interconnected (Morris, 536).

In verses 39 and 40 John quotes Isaiah 6:9 to explain why the Jews rejected their own messiah. Matthew 13:14f, Mk. 4:12, Lk. 8:10 and Acts 28:26f also record these same quotes of Jesus from Isaiah. Jesus used them to explain that people heard the words He spoke in His parable outwardly, but they were unable to grasp their meaning. Their unbelief was not just foreseen, it was necessitated by Scripture (Carson, 447). That is, these things happened *so that* Scripture would be fulfilled. Verse 39 is clear that it is for *this reason* that they could not believe.

From a biblical worldview, everything is ascribed to the will of God; unless His hand is in it, nothing is possible. But when it says that God has blinded their eyes, we must not conclude that this means that it happens without man's will, against man's will, or contrary to man's will. God is not hardening people who would otherwise desire to know Him: He is hardening people who desire evil, choose evil, and hate Christ.

Verse 39 ties the texts of verses 38 and 40 together. It is important to see what is said and what isn't said. It says that GOD has blinded their eyes. It *doesn't* say *how* He has done this. These quotes must be understood in the contexts in which they appear as well as how they are being used here. In Isaiah 6, Isaiah is commissioned to bring God's word, but is told that the people will reject it (Isa. 6:9-11). Isaiah's words (the words of God) drove men even further from God. They made them even more hardened toward Him. God hardened the hearts of men through the prophet. Thus, in Isaiah 63:15-19, the prophet prays that God will act in more merciful ways. The reason the Jews could not believe in Christ was because they responded to Him in the same way that the people in Isaiah's day responded to God's word through the prophet. The same words that could potentially bring light, blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts.

There are 4 points to remember when reading passages like this:

- 1) God's sovereignty is never pitted against human responsibility. The Bible never assumes that because God acts, men are puppets who aren't responsible for their actions.
- 2) God is not manipulating morally neutral people or blinding people who can see; He is strengthening what guilty people already feel. In other words, the baseline we must work from is that people don't want to see and hear the things of God. A child who hates his parents doesn't want to hear their instruction or submit to their direction; he just wants to be left alone. Even though the parents' advice would benefit the child, everything the parent says is rejected *because* it is the parent who is saying it. In addition to that, the more the parent says, the deeper the resentment and greater the animosity becomes, making reconciliation even more difficult. When the parent speaks, what was bad becomes worse. But the problem isn't in what the parent is saying; it is with the one who is listening. In a similar way, when God reveals Himself to people who hate Him, it results in greater hatred. The one who refuses to see becomes blind, and the one who closes his ears, becomes deaf. The blindness and deafness are the work of God, but they are also the judicial consequences of man's rebellious heart. However, even this can be used to accomplish God's purposes (see 4 below).
- 3) God's sovereignty is also a cause for hope. If man's reactions to God were under man's control, why pray? God couldn't change anything anyway.
- 4) God's hardening of men is a "strange work" (Isa. 28:21-22) that causes His ultimate purposes to come to pass. As Leon Morris said, if the Jews had not rejected Christ, it is hard to imagine how salvation would have gone to the world.

THE FINAL CHALLENGE TO BELIEVE

12:44 *And Jesus cried out and said, "He who believes in Me, does not believe in Me but in Him who sent Me.*

12:45 *"He who sees Me sees the One who sent Me.*

12: 46 *"I have come as Light into the world, so that everyone who believes in Me will not remain in darkness.*

12:47 *"If anyone hears My sayings and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world.*

12: 48 *"He who rejects Me and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day.*

12: 49 *"For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me a commandment as to what to say and what to speak.*

12:50 *"I know that His commandment is eternal life; therefore the things I speak, I speak just as the Father has told Me."*

Verses 44-50 bring this section in the Book of John to a close. Since 12:36 says that Jesus had hid Himself, it is possible that John is repeating what he had heard Jesus say at a different time and is inserting it here as his conclusion of this section for those reading the gospel.

Jesus seeks for people to believe in Him, not because He seeks glory, but because He is an emissary of the Father; He is the one who represents the one who sent Him.

One more time He offers to free people from darkness and tells His hearers that He came to save, not judge. However, men are responsible for what they have heard, and if they do not believe, Christ's words will condemn them on the last day.

Jesus' words are the words of the Father. To reject Him is to reject God.