

John 12

- As John records Jesus' unavoidable march toward the cross, he takes great care to record many details from Jesus' final week that the other Gospel writers overlooked
 - Over the next ten chapters, John captures extended discourses between Jesus and the disciples
 - In particular, at the Last Supper and in the Garden before He is betrayed, John captures very intimate moments absent from the other Gospels
 - Also, the High Priestly prayer Jesus prays with the Father is recorded only in John
 - And John adds important details to our understanding of the trials and crucifixion of Jesus
 - Finally, John offers fascinating detail on the days following Jesus' resurrection
 - All these things await us in the second half of this study, but today we return to Jesus having entered Jerusalem on the Sunday before Passover
 - Over the past three months, the pressure has been building to find Jesus
 - The Pharisees have asked for help
 - And the crowds are waiting to see if Jesus would appear for Passover
 - Now that He has entered the city, a conflict is inevitable
 - And it's because of this building pressure that Jesus knows His death is coming shortly
 - So we pick up again today as John relates a brief and interesting encounter that happened after Jesus' triumphant entry into the city

[John 12:20](#) Now there were some Greeks among those who were going up to worship at the feast;

[John 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."

[John 12:22](#) Philip came and told Andrew; Andrew and Philip came and told Jesus.

[John 12:23](#) And Jesus answered them, saying, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.

[John 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.

[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.

[John 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.

- As Jesus death approaches, a group of Gentiles (John calls them Greeks) approaches to worship Jesus
 - They aren't sure where to find Jesus, so they ask Philip where He can be found
 - This is a curious and almost out-of-place event in John's Gospel
 - No other writer thought to mention it
 - So we might wonder why John chose to include it?
 - Well, it reminds us of another group of Gentiles that came from afar seeking to worship the Lord in Israel
 - This visit happened at the very beginning of Jesus' earthly life
 - They too had to ask where He could be found
 - Those magi were a testimony to the power of the Messiah to reach the world, even the Gentile world outside Israel
 - Now at the end of Jesus' life, He has accomplished that purpose yet again
 - Gentiles were now streaming to Jerusalem to find and worship the Messiah
 - We're told in Zechariah and elsewhere that the Gentile nations will stream to Jerusalem to worship the Messiah

- The fulfillment of that prophecy awaits the Kingdom
- But even now it's fulfillment is prefigured by the arrival of these Gentiles
- When the disciples brought the news to Jesus that even Gentiles were coming to Him, it becomes the catalyst for Him to announce the hour of His death had come
 - It seems that the Gentiles' arrival to Jerusalem demonstrated that Jesus no longer belonged to Israel alone
 - He was now prepared to die for the sins of the whole world, as John says in His letter
- In v.23 Jesus declares the Son of Man will be glorified in death and resurrection
 - How Jesus must have feared what He was speaking concerning Himself?
 - He knew this must happen and it's what He's been moving toward this end even from the beginning
 - Nevertheless, His obedience to that mission is about to be sorely tested in His humanity
 - To help explain the beneficial purpose for His death, Jesus teaches through a parable
 - Jesus uses the example of a seed
 - It's very purpose for existing is to give life
 - But before that seed can serve its intended purpose, it must be buried, which is a picture of dying
 - Paul uses this same analogy in 1Cor 15 to explain bodily resurrection
 - So Jesus is saying He's prepared to die and be buried so by His death He would bear "much fruit," which must be the greatest of all understatement
 - Jesus also says that this one Seed will fall into the earth by itself
 - Generally, farmers sow individual seeds in their own hole in the ground

- In applying that agricultural practice to Himself, Jesus is explaining that He expected to be abandoned by everyone
- Though there were adoring crowds now and even His devoted disciples, they were about to disappear
- Why was Jesus going to be alone? Because sinful always flesh places greater importance on earthly goals over spiritual goals
 - Jesus is about to sacrifice Himself so that others may live, so Jesus lectures these men to do the same knowing they will soon turn their backs on Him
 - Paradoxically, Jesus says that death is the way to life
 - He means it in three primary ways
 - First, He means if someone loves earthly life, then he will miss the opportunity to gain eternal life
 - In a sense, Jesus is defining the repentance that leads to salvation
 - Repentance is a humbling of oneself to recognize that the life we know on earth is not true life
 - We come to agree we are sinners destined to eternal death
 - We must be willing to let this old self go to the grave
 - And instead, we embrace new life in Christ
 - As Paul says, we are buried with Christ so we can be raised with Him
 - Secondly, Jesus is saying we must be willingly to die to self so we can follow Christ
 - We no longer seek for the lifestyle the world offers
 - If we seek after that life, then we won't seek for the life that comes by abiding in Christ
 - We don't depend on this world to find our satisfaction
 - We don't measure rewards by what we gain for ourselves in a world destined to burn up

- We must all adopt the attitude that everything in this world is worth forfeiting for the sake of what Jesus offers in eternity
- Finally, the church must be prepared to follow in Jesus' footsteps by going to the grave if required to support the mission of the church
 - It's often said that the blood of Christian martyrs has watered the seed of the church
 - The death of Christians in the face of persecution is commonly a source for salvation in a new generation
 - And whenever Christians demonstrate that their love for Christ is greater than their love for their life, God uses that testimony to bring more souls life
 - Our death can become a source of new eternal life for another
- Jesus summarizes this final point saying that whoever turns to Jesus should expect to follow in His footsteps in v.26
 - No servant can avoid going where the Master goes
 - Jesus leads His people and so wherever we're drawn to serve, we can know He is bringing us there
 - These words are clearly looking forward to the time when these men will be without Jesus on earth
 - Nevertheless, He will still be leading them
 - And He does the same for us today
 - By His Spirit, He leads us into the moments where He intends to perform ministry through us
 - And the Father will honor the one who serves Christ
 - That honor may be evidenced on earth to some extent
 - But regardless, it will be evidenced in Heaven
- With death on His mind, Jesus now begins to explain the purpose in His coming death
 - Jesus' explanation goes over the heads of the crowd and even the disciples
 - But Jesus is merely planting seeds with these statements

[John 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.

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

[John 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."

[John 12:30](#) Jesus answered and said, "This voice has not come for My sake, but for your sakes.

- My Bible says Jesus describes His "soul" as troubled, but the Greek word for soul has a wide variety of meanings
 - It can mean soul, life, heart and even mind
 - So it also can mean the whole person
 - I think that's how Jesus means it here
 - His soul or spirit was committed to the mission, but His humanity – His Person – was troubled by what He knew lay ahead
 - The Greek word translated troubled means frightened
 - Our Lord was frightened but the pain of the beatings
 - The terror of the scourge
 - Unimaginable suffering of the cross
 - Our Lord was God, but He was also a man, and His power as God only served to magnify His suffering
 - First, Jesus knew that this time (this "hour") was coming
 - How much worse is it to know that a terrible thing lies in your future?
 - Better to not know before it happens, right?
 - Furthermore, Jesus had the power to stop it at anytime
 - Notice Jesus asks rhetorically what should He say to the Father?
 - Should He call to the Father and ask Him to save Him from this hour?

- How much harder still is it for someone to contemplate a horrible death knowing you have the power to stop it
- What compels someone to go forward? Love
 - Jesus' love for the Father compelled Him to obey despite His suffering
 - Jesus says it was for this purpose He came to this point
 - If Jesus hadn't been willing to go through with this plan, He never would have begun it
 - Consider the contrast between this second Adam and the first Adam
 - The first Adam was compelled to obey the Father
 - And he lived under ideal conditions
 - Nothing in Adam's existence made obeying God's word difficult
 - Nevertheless, he disobeyed...without hardly a thought
 - But Christ came as the second Adam to reverse the mistake of the first
 - But Jesus' circumstances were a product of the first Adam's mistake
 - Jesus entered a world of sin, not paradise
 - Jesus came to die in suffering, not to live in perfection
 - And Jesus persevered in obedience though it troubled His soul
- Therefore, Jesus doesn't say Father save Me, but says Father glorify Your Name
 - Jesus insists that the Father command His Son to do what brings Him glory
 - He speaks these words as a petition to the Father
 - And so then the Father answers with words that all can hear
 - He says He has glorified His Name and He will again
 - This is the third time that the Father has answered Jesus from Heaven
 - The first was at His baptism
 - The second at His transfiguration

- And now as Jesus rejects the temptation to avoid the cross
- Only John records this third incident
- It's interesting that in all three cases, but especially in this case, these supernatural dramatic revelations from God are veiled
 - They are obviously intended to show the Father's endorsement of His Son and His obedience
 - And yet the audiences are always unsure of what they are hearing or seeing
 - Or they miss it altogether
 - Notice in v.29 the crowd is debating what they heard and they assume it was said for Jesus' benefit
 - Why would God produce such a display and yet veil it from its witnesses?
 - Even Jesus says it was for their benefit and not for His
 - Jesus didn't need an answer to His prayer for He knew the will of the Father
 - The people needed to know that the Son was doing the Father's will
 - Yet it was veiled to them
 - The reason is because the Father glorifies Himself through His Son
 - The Son represents the Father
 - As the writer of Hebrews says

Heb. 1:1 God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways,

Heb. 1:2 in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.

Heb. 1:3 And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power...

- That's what the Father means when He says that He has glorified His name and will again

- Jesus' has been glorifying the Father in all that He has done
- And He will yet glorify the Father even more by what He's about to do on the cross
- Which is what Jesus meant as well when He asked the Father to glorify His name
- He meant give Me the strength to make it to the cross
- So this supernatural display was another seed planted for the disciples to know that the Son's death was a part of the Father's plan
 - We need to understand that what's about to happen will completely rock the disciples' world
 - The last thing they're expecting is for their Messiah and Lord to die
 - As we'll see later, it leads them to conclude that the entire movement is lost
- Can you imagine what it meant to a Jew to think their Messiah had failed in His mission?
 - That will be the depth of their hopelessness after the cross
 - So even now the Father and Jesus are preparing these men to understand the true purpose behind the events
- Then Jesus moves into explaining the purpose in His coming suffering and death

[John 12:31](#) "Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out.

[John 12:32](#) "And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself."

[John 12:33](#) But He was saying this to indicate the kind of death by which He was to die.

- Adam's sin brought the world under God's judgment
 - And now the Father was preparing to bring that judgment
 - Except that the judgment would rest entirely on Christ
 - He was literally to become Atlas, holding the world on His shoulders
- By His death, the Lord would also cast out the enemy of the world

- The enemy's power was established when he robbed man of fellowship with God
- And that power is taken away when men are reconciled to God
- And since our sin is that barrier, we can say that the enemy's power lies in the way he brought men into sin
- And likewise, Jesus' power over the enemy is evidenced in His ability to remove the penalty for sin
- Therefore, Jesus explains that if He is lifted up on a cross, then it will serve to draw men to Him
 - As the world comes to understand that Jesus has taken their penalty upon Himself, many will flock to Him in thankfulness
 - This is the draw of the Gospel
 - It tells the world that they have been forgiven of sin
 - They have nothing to fear from God, since all the wrath they deserve has been taken upon Christ
 - This reminds us that if we try to preach the Gospel without discussing the reality of sin and the penalty that sin deserves, we gut the power of the message
 - The death of Christ is powerful and compelling only when we understand what it accomplished on our behalf
 - We can all applaud the one who dies sacrificial in defense of others
 - Like a soldier falling on a grenade to save a comrade
 - But we are personally devoted to the One who would die on our behalf
 - It's different when the life that was saved is our own
 - So our presentation of the Gospel must include the reality that all men are destined for eternal death in fire and torment for sin
 - And that only by the death of One in our place can that penalty be avoided
 - And Christ so loved the world, that He died in our place

- So that as He was lifted up, He would draw men to Himself
- All this strange talk of dying and the Son of Man has the crowd pondering, so they ask Jesus to explain

[John 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?”

[John 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.

[John 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.

- At the suggestion that the Messiah was going to die, the crowd says wait a minute, we thought the word says the Messiah will live forever
 - And now you’re telling us you have to be lifted up (which the crowd took to mean dying)
 - This bothered them to no end
 - It seemed like Jesus was violating scripture, which began to worry them
 - And the term Son of Man was confusing them, though Daniel uses this term to describe the Messiah
 - It’s probably no coincidence that this is the last mention of a crowd following Jesus in the Gospels
 - It would seem that this discussion of His death worries the crowd to the point that they are no longer interested in following
 - Already, the seed is beginning to be buried alone
- Sensing their fickleness, rather than answer their questions Jesus presents the crowd with the call of the Gospel once more
 - Jesus calls them to walk in the Light
 - Of course, we are very familiar with the metaphor of light by now
 - It means to know the truth of Christ
 - To live in the light of spiritual truth

- And the fact that the Light is only among them a little longer makes this call all the more imperative
 - We sit here today faithful followers of a Jesus we've yet to see
 - These people were standing mere feet from Him as He spoke
 - Don't you wish you could be in that moment, to see Jesus walking the earth as a man?
- What a privilege these people had!
 - But they shrugged their shoulders and left
 - So Jesus went away and hid Himself from the people
 - The time for convincing the crowds was over...death was near
- This generation was witness to God incarnate, and yet they walked away unimpressed
 - How can any human being stand in the presence of the Creator of the Universe and not fall on his face?
 - Why did crowds hear Jesus and see Him and not accept Him?
 - We see this theme of why some believe and other do not returning again in John's narrative
- And the same answer comes in the next passage

[John 12:37](#) But though He had performed so many signs before them, yet they were not believing in Him.

[John 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?"

[John 12:39](#) For this reason they could not believe, for Isaiah said again,

[John 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."

[John 12:41](#) These things Isaiah said because he saw His glory, and he spoke of Him.

- Though Jesus performed so many signs and spoken so many words, still the crowds were not believing in Him

- And the fact that so many rejected Jesus was a result of God's sovereign will
 - The prophet Isaiah was called to write provocative words concerning how the Messiah would be received when He arrived
 - Isaiah asks in chapter 53 who believes the report that the Messiah has arrived for Israel?
 - The question is rhetorical, for the answer will be obvious
 - Virtually no one in Israel believes when the Lord arrives for that nation
- But the fact that Israel doesn't receive their Messiah wasn't chance or the whim of an individual's desires or conclusions
 - No, John says that the nation's rejection of their Messiah was an outcome produced by the will of God
 - In v.40 John quotes Isaiah 6 where the prophet says that God Himself has blinded the eyes of Israel
 - And God hardened the heart of Israel
 - And He did these things so that they would not see Jesus as Messiah
 - And they would not believe that He was Messiah
 - For if they had done so, then the Lord would have been obligated by His own word to heal them
- So not to point a fine point on it, the Lord prevent Israel from receiving their Messiah
 - They heard, but they didn't understand
 - They saw, but they didn't believe
- And this was all done to fulfill prophecy in Isaiah, which said that the Messiah would be rejected by Israel
 - And in case we're in doubt that Isaiah knew what he was talking about, John says Isaiah saw Jesus' glory and knew of it
 - Isaiah knew exactly what was coming in the Messiah

- Which is why everything Isaiah wrote is perfectly accurate to the events of Jesus' life
- Of course, the question in our minds is why did the Lord say He would do such things to Israel and then carry them out?
 - How can the Lord be just to reject His own people?
 - Well, the answer begins with a promise spoken to Abraham
 - In the covenant God made to Abraham, He said

**Gen. 12:2 And I will make you a great nation,
And I will bless you,
And make your name great;
And so you shall be a blessing;**

**Gen. 12:3 And I will bless those who bless you,
And the one who curses you I will curse.
And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed."**

- The promises spoken to Abraham mention that through him God would bless all the families or nations of the earth
 - God committed Himself to bringing a blessing to the whole world through the descendants of Abraham
 - God fulfills that promise by bringing the Messiah to all nations
 - The Gospel is traveling the world fulfilling God's word to Abraham even today
- So God needed a plan to send the Gospel beyond the Jewish people
 - But if the Gospel was going to go to the world, it needed time to get there
 - And it required the Messiah to deliver it
 - But if Israel had received their Messiah when He came to deliver the Gospel, then the Lord would have been obligated to receive them according to His promises
 - As Isaiah said, if Israel heard the message and receive it, then the Lord would heal them

- And once Israel receives their Messiah, the Kingdom will commence
- So, secondly, the Lord needed a just way to reject His own people for a time to permit the opportunity for the Gentile nations to receive the Messiah He promised them
 - Therefore, the Lord entered into a covenant with Israel at Mt Sinai
 - In that covenant, the Lord delivered the Law
 - And if the people agreed to the Law, they were promised to receive the Kingdom and the blessings of the Land
 - But if they broke the covenant, then the Lord would be just in bringing the nation through a period of judgment
 - The nation agreed to this covenant, and then promptly broke it
 - When they broke it, they gave God just reason to enact the judgments spelled out in the covenant
 - Those judgments include a long period in which the nation is set outside God's mercy, called the Age of the Gentiles, described in Daniel
 - And it's during this age that the Messiah appears to Israel
 - God orchestrated the Messiah's appearance to Israel to fall within this period of judgment for their sin under the Old Covenant so that He could be justified in rejecting them
 - That's what Isaiah means when he says that the Lord blinded the people of the nation
 - He was keeping His word to judge the nation for disobeying the Old Covenant
 - And simultaneously the Lord was keeping His word to Abraham to bring the Gospel to the nations of the Earth
- So the people of Israel were set aside by the Lord so that they wouldn't receive the Gospel when it was offered
 - Because Israel rejected it, then the message had time and opportunity to go another people, the Gentiles
 - As Paul says quoting Hosea and Isaiah

Rom. 9:25 As He says also in Hosea,

**“I WILL CALL THOSE WHO WERE NOT MY PEOPLE, ‘MY PEOPLE,’
AND HER WHO WAS NOT BELOVED, ‘BELOVED.’”**

Rom. 9:26 **“AND IT SHALL BE THAT IN THE PLACE WHERE IT WAS SAID TO THEM, ‘YOU ARE NOT MY PEOPLE,’**

THERE THEY SHALL BE CALLED SONS OF THE LIVING GOD.”

- The Lord called the Gentiles, who were not His people, because He promised to do so
 - So that the Gentiles who were not looking for a Messiah found Him
 - While the Jewish people, who were supposed to be awaiting their Messiah, lost Him in that generation
- This plan of God explains why the nation could be so blind to their own Messiah, as John has demonstrated
 - But all is not lost for Israel
 - For as God promised salvation to the Gentiles, He also promised the Kingdom for Israel
- So one day the Lord returns to bless Israel, as Paul says

Rom. 11:7 What then? What Israel is seeking, it has not obtained, but those who were chosen obtained it, and the rest were hardened;

Rom. 11:8 just as it is written,

**“GOD GAVE THEM A SPIRIT OF STUPOR,
EYES TO SEE NOT AND EARS TO HEAR NOT,
DOWN TO THIS VERY DAY.”**

Rom. 11:9 And David says,

**“LET THEIR TABLE BECOME A SNARE AND A TRAP,
AND A STUMBLING BLOCK AND A RETRIBUTION TO THEM.**

Rom. 11:10 **“LET THEIR EYES BE DARKENED TO SEE NOT,
AND BEND THEIR BACKS FOREVER.”**

Rom. 11:11 I say then, they did not stumble so as to fall, did they? May it never be! But by their transgression salvation has come to the Gentiles, to make them jealous.

- The stupor the Lord gave to Israel will last only until the purposes in that stupor have been met

- And the purpose is to bring the Gospel to the Gentiles worldwide
- Notice again that Paul reiterates that Israel's rejection of the Messiah was by the hand of God
- But this stumble wasn't intended to bring the nation to its end
 - Instead it was a temporary measure to fulfill God's promise to the Gentiles
 - But at some point the Lord will return to Israel and complete His plan of redemption on their behalf
 - As Paul concludes in Romans 11

Rom. 11:25 For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery – so that you will not be wise in your own estimation – that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in;

Rom. 11:26 and so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written,

“THE DELIVERER WILL COME FROM ZION,
HE WILL REMOVE UNGODLINESS FROM JACOB.”

Rom. 11:27 “THIS IS MY COVENANT WITH THEM,
WHEN I TAKE AWAY THEIR SINS.”

- When God's plan for the Gentiles is completed or fulfilled, He will return to Israel and bring them the Gospel again, as the Messiah comes from Zion
 - The Second Coming of Christ will be the moment the Lord fulfills His promises to Israel
 - It will also be the moment when the judgments of the Law are brought to their end
 - All these details are explained in much greater detail in the Revelation study online
 - Nevertheless, John refers to this grand plan of God to explain the otherwise unexplainable circumstances we're seeing here
 - As the nation of Israel runs from their Messiah despite the clear evidence that Jesus is the One they have awaited
 - With blinded eyes and hardened hearts, the crowd dissipates, and Jesus retreats into privacy preparing for His death

- On the other hand, the fact that many rejected Jesus doesn't mean that no one accepted Him of course
 - God's plan to bypass Israel for time didn't mean that God turns His back on the entire nation
 - In fact, Paul teaches that the Lord always keep some of Israel within the family of God
 - This He does to ensure that the nation never ceases to exist in fellowship with Him
 - We call this believing element within Israel the remnant

Rom. 11:4 But what is the divine response to him? "I HAVE KEPT for Myself SEVEN THOUSAND MEN WHO HAVE NOT BOWED THE KNEE TO BAAL."

Rom. 11:5 In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to God's gracious choice.

- Therefore, the remnant was present even in Jesus' day, as John explains at the end of the chapter

John 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;

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

- John says many of Israel were believing in Him, even among the rulers of Israel
 - Yet we don't see the leaders of Israel stepping forward to embrace Jesus as Christ
 - And the reason for the Pharisees not confessing Jesus publicly was fear and peer pressure
 - We know of Nicodemus already
 - And later we learn of Joseph of Arimathea
 - And John indicates there were others as well
 - This is sober reminder that even among believers the pressure to conceal our allegiance to Christ can be great

- Even in the very presence of the Messiah, some followers loved the approval of the world more than the approval of God
- Consider that statement for a moment
- When you silence your confession, you are forfeiting the approval of God
- When you conceal your witness, you're forfeiting the approval for God
- When you seek to please the world rather than God, you are following in the footsteps of the Pharisees
- But what's about to follow will put everyone to test
 - Do they fear men or fear God?
 - Do they desire the approval of men or God?
 - Are they willing to follow in the footsteps of their Lord?
- Next time, we begin the Last Supper, which continues for five chapters, the longest scene in John's Gospel