

A KERNEL OF WHEAT

John 12:20-36

Old story depicts tourists wandering through a European art museum. They repeatedly mutter critical comments about paintings they dislike.

After a while, a frustrated guide speaks: ***“The paintings in this museum are not on trial; only the spectators are.”***

As we follow Jesus through the events in John’s gospel, it becomes apparent that it isn’t JESUS who’s on trial.

It’s the crowd following Him.

That’s evident in ch. 12 –Jesus’ final discourse to the crowd.

Jesus concludes informing the crowd

that His Words will judge them;

it’s NOT the other way around.

Throughout history, even in our day, “experts” set themselves up as judges to critique & criticize God’s Word.

In the end, **His Word will judge them.**

Opposition to Son of God 5-12

Jesus’ words & works demon-strate that He’s God’s Son.

Instead of accepting evidence and receiving Him, people criticize, reject the evidence, & opposition develops.

Opposition over Healing of a Paralytic 5:1-47

Jesus demonstrates His power over disease by curing a para-lytic beside the pool of Bethesda (1-15).

Rather than produce faith in Him, the incident produces a negative reaction because the healing is performed on the Sabbath (16-18).

Jesus’ response angers the Jews for **two reasons**:

They’re angry because

He heals on the Sabbath. They’re angry because

He claims to be equal with God.

In light of evidence, Jesus asks why they refuse to trust Him.

The answer is clear: (5:39-47)

They reject *Him* because they’re not following *God* who sent Him.

Opposition Concerning the Bread of Life 6:1-71

Confirmation of Jesus’ claim to be God:

He multiplies 5 loaves & 2 fish to feed 5000.

This leads to **discourse con-cerning the bread of life**, which stirs more opposition.

Tension Between Evidence & Unbelief 7:1-53

Key to understanding the conflict is stated by Christ in 7:17:

Those who *want* to obey God discover the truth concerning Him.

Unbelief arises because they don’t *want* to know the truth.

Rejection of His Words & Works 8:12-12:19

Following these manifestations of opposition, Jesus’ words and works continue to demonstrate that He’s God.

Those messages and miracles meet growing opposition.

Discourse concerning the light of the world 8:12-30

Debate about the children of Abraham 8:31-59

Jesus promises His followers knowledge of truth that will set them free.

This discussion provokes debate concerning Abraham's children that leads to another rejection of Him and His message.

Healing of a man born blind 9:1-41

Discourse concerning the good shepherd 10:1-30

Debate concerning claim to be God 10:31-42

Resurrection of Lazarus 11:1-44

Final sign provides conclusive proof that Jesus is God's Son.

This isn't a borderline case where someone brings a defibrillator!

He's been dead four days!

If you've ever been around a dead body—it's a mess by now!

Plot to kill Him 11:45-57

Sign which ought to prove that Jesus is Messiah, becomes basis for decision that they have to do something now.

If they leave Him alone everyone's going to trust Him!

Therefore, they make plans to eliminate Him.

Preparation for Death 12:1-22

As hour of death draws near, Jesus prepares for final climactic events.

Anointing for death 12:1-8 6 days before the Passover, Jesus arrived at Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. ²Here a dinner was given in Jesus' honor. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him. ³Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet & wiped his feet with her hair. & the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. ⁴But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected, ⁵"Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages." ⁶He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it. ⁷"Leave her alone," Jesus replied. "It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial. ⁸You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me."

In Bethany, Mary anoints Jesus' feet with expensive perfume.

In contrast to Mary's act of worship, Judas complains about the wasted money.

Jesus defends her; she's motivated by love to prepare for His burial.

Contrast presented by Jews who plan to kill Lazarus, since people are trusting Jesus because of him

Attempt to destroy the evidence. 12:9-11 A large crowd of Jews found out that Jesus was there & came, not only because of him but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. ¹⁰So the chief priests made plans to kill Lazarus as well, ¹¹for on account of him many of the Jews were going over to Jesus & putting their faith in him.

As in modern, corrupt society,

They're more interested in proving their point;

More interested in discrediting Jesus, than in discovering truth.

Triumphal entry 12:12-16

The next day Jesus enters Jerusalem, presenting Himself as Messiah.

The next day the great crowd that had come for the Feast heard that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem. ¹³They took palm branches & went out to meet him, shouting, "Hosanna!" "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Blessed is the King of Israel!" ¹⁴Jesus found a young donkey & sat upon it, as it is written, ¹⁵"Do not be afraid, O Daughter of Zion; see, your

king is coming, seated on a donkey's colt." ¹⁶At first his disciples did not understand all this. Only after Jesus was glorified did they realize that these things had been written about him and that they had done these things to him.

Mixed reaction 12:17-22

The people 12:17-18 They praise God and celebrate. "Now the crowd that was with him when he called Lazarus from the tomb & raised him from the dead continued to spread the word. ¹⁸Many people, because they had heard that he had given this miraculous sign, went out to meet him."

The Pharisees 12:19 Popular response frightens them even more. So the Pharisees said to one another, "See, this is getting us nowhere. Look how the whole world has gone after him!"

They have to do something!

Some Greeks 12:20-22

Evidence of how "the whole world" is going after Him

In contrast to Jewish rejection of Jesus, some Greeks (pagans!) come looking for Him.

It's pagan Greeks—NOT the Jewish crowd— who want to see Jesus!

Now there were some Greeks among those who went up to worship at the Feast. ²¹They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, with a request. "Sir," they said, "we would like to see Jesus." ²²Philip went to tell Andrew; Andrew & Philip in turn told Jesus.

Prediction of His Death 12:23-36

The leaders' plot to kill Him is no surprise to Jesus.

He announces it in advance to His followers so they won't be surprised nor defeated by it.

Prediction Summarized 23

Jesus replied, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.

Jesus told them repeatedly: His hour hadn't yet come—it isn't time yet.

Now the time has come—it's time for Him to be glorified.

How is He to be glorified?

Not the way WE'd expect!

We'd never plan this route to glory—nor would Jesus' followers!

Explanation of the Plan

24 "Unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground & dies, it remains only a single seed [alone]. But if it dies, it produces many seeds [much fruit].

Jesus' glory comes through dying.

Jesus' death produces glory.

Jesus' death produces much fruit.

God's plan is to produce fruit by Jesus' death.

Implication for His Followers 25-26 The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. ²⁶Whoever serves me must follow me; & where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me.

What are we living for?

He who "loves his life" => that's his priority; he's committed to...

If we're living for this life—for the "here and now"

It's all temporary—we're going to lose it!

If we're willing to give up this life...

If we don't cling to life in this world...

We end up with ETERNAL life, which is far better.

Are we characterized by pursuit of *this* life, or of *eternal* life?

Those who want to serve Jesus, follow the same path: 26

Serving Jesus results in following Him—to death!

But that *death* leads to *life* in His presence,

That *death* leads to GLORY.

The Father honors him.

So what are WE living for?

Are we hanging on to this life? Or to Him?

CRITICAL QUESTION:

Jesus has to think through the same issue we do.

He knows where this is headed! **27** *“Now my heart is troubled, & what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour.*

If this path leads to death, does He really want to go through with this?

Should He ask God to get Him out of it?

No, that’s why He came.

Rather than seek to escape this hour, Jesus has come to fulfill it, –He’s willing to die.

Petition: Jesus’ ultimate response:

His prayer is that God be glorified, even through His death

28a *Father, glorify your name!*

God confirms the disciples’ faith by answering...

28b *Then a voice came from heaven, “I have glorified it, and will glorify it again.”*

God has already been glorified through Jesus.

God will be glorified through Jesus.

Proclamation to the Crowd 29-36 29-30 *The crowd that was there & heard it said it had thundered; others said an angel had spoken to him. ³⁰ Jesus said, “This voice was for your benefit, not mine.*

The crowd’s response to God’s voice 29-30

The crowd hears God speak,

but don’t know what they’re hearing.

Some think it’s thunder.

Some think it’s an angel speaking to Jesus.

Jesus says it’s a message to get their attention.

He concludes with His **final teaching lesson to the crowd**

–a final warning to trust Him while He’s still with them.

Jesus’ proclamation of His death 31-33 *Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. 32 But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself.” 33 He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die.*

Negatively, Jesus’ death is the basis for the world’s judgment, & for Satan’s defeat. 31

Positively, Jesus’ death is the basis for all people to receive salvation. 32-33

The crowd’s question 34 *The crowd spoke up, “We have heard from the Law that the Christ will remain forever, so how can you say, ‘The Son of Man must be lifted up’? Who is this ‘Son of Man’?”*

Jesus is presenting Himself as Messiah.

But Messiah remains forever—they’re not expecting HIM to die.

Jesus had to teach His followers about this too. They didn't get it!

Messiah never dies.

So, then, WHO is Jesus? How can He die?

Jesus' invitation to the crowd to trust Him 35-36 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. The man who walks in the dark does not know where he is going. ³⁶ Put your trust in the light while you have it, so that you may become sons of light."

If we want to avoid the judgment & enjoy God's blessing we must trust Him.

By trusting Jesus, we become sons of light.

This is their opportunity –while the Light is with them.

Explanation of Their Unbelief 12:37-50

John concludes discussion of Jesus' rejection by the Jews with an explanation of their unbelief. Isaiah predicted it:

Isaiah's prediction of their unbelief 37-41

Even after Jesus had done all these miraculous signs in their presence, they still would not believe in him. ³⁸This was to fulfill the word of Isaiah the prophet: "Lord, who has believed our message & to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?" ³⁹For this reason they could not believe, because, as Isaiah says elsewhere: ⁴⁰"He has blinded their eyes & deadened [hardened] their hearts, so they can neither see with their eyes, nor understand with their hearts, nor turn— & I would heal them." ⁴¹Isaiah said this because he saw Jesus' glory & spoke of Him

Their unbelief isn't based on lack of evidence.

Their eyes are blinded.

Their hearts are hardened.

They reject Him because they don't want to trust Him.

Rejection of Jesus is a symptom of rejection of God.

Those who seek God recognize His power & trust Jesus.

Fear to acknowledge Him 42-43

Some leaders believe, but pressure from Pharisees prevents them from declaring their faith. **42-43** *At the same time many even among the leaders believed in him. But because of the Phari-sees they would not confess their faith for fear they would be put out of the synagogue; ⁴³for they loved praise from men more than praise from God.*

They're more concerned about what people think, than about what GOD thinks.

Final call to trust Him 44-50 Jesus cried out, "When a man believes in me, he does not believe in me only, but in the one who sent me. ⁴⁵When he looks at me, he sees the one who sent me. ⁴⁶I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness. ⁴⁷"As for the person who hears my words but does not keep them, I do not judge him. For I did not come to judge the world, but to save it. ⁴⁸There is a judge for the one who rejects me & does not accept my words; **that very word which I spoke will condemn him at the last day.** ⁴⁹For I did not speak of my own accord, but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say & how to say it. ⁵⁰I know that **his command leads to eternal life.** So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say."

In this final teaching lesson to the crowd, Jesus tells us that

He is about to die, But by His death, this world & it's prince are judged.

By His death, those who trust Him receive life.

In the end, we'll be judged by how we respond to His Word.

This is our Lord's **final Word to the crowd**. It wraps it all up:

It's an offer of eternal life to those who trust Him.

Will we trust Him? Will we trust the One Who sent Him?

He calls on all who hear to trust Him. **44, 46, 50**

We had better pay attention to what He says, because He speaks with the authority of God Who sent Him.

Those who listen to His Words and trust the promise of the Father Who sent Him HAVE eternal life.

5:24 *"I tell you the truth, whoever hears My word & believes Him Who sent Me has eternal life & will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life."*

Are YOU trusting Him?