

Jesus and Unbelief: John 2-12

John 2:13-22: Jesus the Righteous One

When Jesus entered the Gentile area of the temple, He did not find what He should have found. He was supposed to find a strong Jewish witness to the visiting Gentiles of God's love for them, but instead found Jewish financial exploitation. He became righteously enraged at what he saw and heard.

Jesus reacted by making a whip of cords and moved everyone and everything out of this area that was not supposed to be there. He was deeply affected by the selfishness and hypocrisy of those using the Passover celebration for personal profit at Gentile expense.

He interpreted His actions by saying, "Take these things away! Do not make My Father's house a house of merchandise!" Jesus' heart burned for God's restored glory in Israel. His actions revealed His heart. Jesus was not cruel in what He did, but was righteously judging unholy irreverence. The disciples saw the righteous indignation and were reminded of David's statement, "Zeal for Your house has eaten Me up."

The disciples' reaction to Jesus' actions was of respect. They saw in Him one who was willing to "fight" for righteousness and Jehovah's honor. The offending Jews who were profiting from this financial exploitation also responded to Jesus. Instead of accepting rebuke for what was obviously wrong, they arrogantly questioned Jesus' right to oppose them. The truth is, anyone had the moral right to do what Jesus did, not just some special religious prophet. The Jews were power conscious and they saw what Jesus did as an affront to their authority in Israel. This is what they had on their mind when they asked Jesus, "What sign do you show to us, since you do these things?"

The Jewish leaders' question reveals much about them. They held their positions of power and would not allow mere moral indignation to stop their exploitative acts. The common man was helpless to do anything about this situation. Unless someone with "a sign" opposed them, the challenge was not accepted. This effectively eliminated major opposition. The Jews should have been ashamed but to their discredit they were only annoyed.

They opposed all challenges to their power and Jesus knew that eventually they would resort to murder in order to protect their power base and authority. So Jesus looked ahead for the only sign He would give them: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." He connected His main purpose for the Incarnation and their murderous lust for power by pointing ahead to the time when both would cross paths-His crucifixion.

The Jews in verse 20 did not understand what He meant, nor did they ask for an explanation. They really did not care! The disciples, however, after Jesus' resurrection remembered what He said "at the beginning" of His ministry and their faith was strengthened. Jesus knew what was ahead of Him but still went forward into the jaws of religious and political betrayal, treachery, and murder.

John 3:1-21: Jesus the Patient Teacher

This passage revolves around verbal interchange between Jesus and Nicodemus, a Pharisee and teacher of the Jews. It begins with Nicodemus' approach to Jesus with religious questions. His approach to Jesus was a response to the ministry of Jesus. The actions of Jesus provoked honest inquiry. According to verse 2, Nicodemus was only one of other Jewish teachers who were intrigued by Jesus. Nicodemus was sent as their representative. "We all know that God has sent you to teach us. Your miraculous signs are proof enough that God is with you"

Nicodemus recognized Jesus as a teacher sent by God so Jesus begins to teach. We need to recognize that Jesus was not only teaching Nicodemus but He was also teaching the other interested Jewish teachers as well. What Nicodemus heard he told to the others. We should not see this as just a private teaching for Nicodemus. Jesus wanted Nicodemus and the others who still had open hearts to hear that God's ways were different from theirs. God requires, and always has required, a spiritual relationship with His people. This relationship is not natural. Natural man, if left to himself, cannot relate to God. He must receive grace from God first.

A reoccurring theme throughout Jesus' ministry is Jesus' claims to be other than just a human teacher and the unbelieving Jews' view that He was a illegitimate Samaritan child (John 8:41 and 48). He claimed to be someone entirely new to this world. He claimed to be equal with God, that God is His literal Father, to have preexisted before His birth into the world, to be the Giver of eternal life, and the forgiver of sins. Jesus repeatedly said to them, "If you do not believe Me believe the works I do that I come from God." John 8 tells us that the Jews knew of the circumstances surrounding Jesus' birth. They knew that Joseph was not Jesus' biological father. If Joseph was not his father then who was? Either another man impregnated Mary or something special is happening. Jesus tells Nicodemus face-to-face that God is His Father, that He comes from heaven, and that He would die so that eternal life could be given as God's gift to all who believe.

Nicodemus took this message back to the Jewish teachers and leaders. Jesus continues to build on the themes he taught Nicodemus throughout His ministry. He continues to press the issue of His true identity and mission. John 3 records the gospel in a nutshell. All later teachings merely fill out and expand our understanding about what Jesus is saying here. Jesus continued to perform verifying miracles to validate His message and mission. For three years Jesus

taught. And for three years the Jewish teachers and leaders evaluated Him. As John 19:39 records, Nicodemus eventually becomes a believer. He came to Jesus with honest inquiry. He watched and listened to Jesus speak and act. And he believed. Nicodemus may not have completely understood Jesus' full identity, but he knew that Jesus was indeed sent from God and that His message was true. Unfortunately, others saw the same acts and heard the same message but rejected Him. They did not want what He was offering.

John 4: Jesus' Healing Hand

In John 4 there are five people or groups of people that interact with Jesus: the woman at the well, the Samaritans of Sychar, the disciples, the Galileans, and a Capernaum nobleman.

As the woman of Sychar came to the well outside the city, she found Jesus waiting for her. Jesus had a divine appointment to make with this woman and He was right on time. A couple of things of importance must be noted before an analysis can be made of Jesus' interaction with this woman. First, this woman went to the well alone. Unlike the other women of the city who usually went to the well at the same approximate time in the evening, she went in the afternoon (the "sixth hour"). Secondly, Jesus was a Jew and the woman was a Samaritan. Hatred and contempt were the normal feelings held one toward the other.

Jesus responds to her rather bitter and sarcastic question by zeroing in on her soul's thirst needs. He starts this process by calling to her mind the mental image of a bubbling, "alive", spring of water. The kind of water that was always preferred was the running, fresh water of bubbling springs and streams alive with oxygen and minerals.

She responds to Jesus with both doubt and hurt hope. She conveyed doubt because Jesus did not have a bucket to catch water with. But behind her next two statements one can see a hurt hope that is longing for something different and able to quench her soul's hurt. Why do I say this? First, she asks where this water source can be found. Implying her desire to go elsewhere for her water so she wouldn't have to run into all the people she is avoiding and being rejected by. Secondly, she is looking for someone or something greater than what the Samaritans already have with their religion and traditions. This woman is "burned-out" from the lifestyle she has lived. She sought to fill the thirst in her soul for secure relationship with numerous unsuccessful and illicit relationships with men. Through it all, the void and thirst are still there. Jesus' goal is to make her more aware of her soul thirst so that she will be more open to receiving the "living water" He has to offer her.

Verse 15 finds her asking for the water she does not have to come to the well for. Jesus, however, goes to the heart of the trouble (v. 16-19)-her soul's thirst. He taps into her soul pain. All of her past strategies to relieve this pain have failed--men and ritual religion.

Her response shows that she is not resisting Jesus' pull into spiritual-soul issues (v. 19-20). She asks Jesus about worship, and by this opens up to Jesus His next step to evangelize her. Jesus responds with a non-typical Jewish view. "But the hour is coming, and now is, when true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth: for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." The woman is perceptive at this point and recognizes the uniqueness of what Jesus said. Her mind at this point recalls the things she has heard about the coming Messiah's ministry and says of Him, "When He comes, He will tell us all things."

Jesus stuns her by directly saying that He is the Messiah. Much to her credit she accepts His statement as true. Everything Jesus said and did up to this point was seen to be consistent with Messiah. He was kind, loving, caring, knowledgeable, and wise in spiritual issues. There were no contradictions in Him that would cause her to doubt His declaration. She then "left her waterpot, went her way into the city, and said to the men, come, see a man who told me all things that I ever did. Could this be the Christ?" The reader can feel the hope in her voice. "Oh, I hope this is Him," her heart cried.

In verses 32-38, Jesus responds to the disciples' admonition to eat by looking toward the eager and curious crowd approaching and says that He has something more important to do. He invites His disciples to join Him in that task-reaping the harvest of hungry souls for the Father's kingdom. Many of the Samaritans of Sychar believed that He was indeed the Messiah and urged Him to dwell with them. Jesus stayed and ministered for two days and many believed in Him. These people were not encumbered by all the Pharisaic rules and regulations. The person of Christ, His qualities, and the truth He spoke found honest, receptive hearts. Unlike the Jewish religious leaders, who were busy protecting their theological and political positions, these people were hungry and waiting for truthful guidance and messianic acceptance.

Next, Jesus goes to Galilee where He previously turned water to wine. As a result of that miracle, many came to see and hear Him. Among them was a nobleman with a sick son seeking healing for him. But Jesus has something more in mind for this encounter.

Is this nobleman's request for healing a test, a selfish request, or was it sincere and genuine? Jesus knew the answer, but the crowd (including the disciples) did not. Jesus is not a circus performer whose purpose is to entertain. And Jesus is not bowing to Pharisaic unbelief that demands a "sign". He wanted those around

Him to know these things. He asks the man, "Are you seeking a sign like so many others are, and refuse to believe unless you see one?" The nobleman's response is genuine and touching. "Sir, come for my child's sake!" Notice the man calls Jesus "sir". As a nobleman he was very conscious about authority and submission issues. Others called him "sir" often. The man extends himself to Jesus and essentially says, "Please help me!" Jesus does! This man does not want a sign, he does not want to test Jesus; he wants Jesus to heal his dying son and believed He could do it. This seems extraordinary to me! Do you think he would ever walk up to any other religious leader and ask him for this type of healing? In Jesus he saw someone very special, someone who could talk intimately with God, someone who could heal his son.

The cleanness of this man's faith is shown by what happens afterward. When the man arrives after the long journey home, he learns that Jesus kept His word. His son was well. He and his whole household, servants included, believed in Jesus. A righteous man bows to his Lord! It strikes me how often people of true faith are not religious leaders. To which of the religious leaders did Jesus ever complement their faith or grant them a healing miracle? It is the people who value goodness and decency that respond to Jesus. Not "i" dotters and "t" crossers! Even when a self-indulgent, wicked man believes on Jesus, it is because he sees in Jesus a Deliverer from sin and the granter of righteousness and goodness. One that does not value goodness will never "go" to Jesus. Jesus holds His arms out and says "Come." Those who "go" want forgiveness granted to them and goodness infused within. This nobleman found what he was looking for, the answer to previous prayers, God's forgiveness and inner healing.

John 5: Jesus Doer of Good on the Sabbath

John 5 records Jesus interacting with an infirmed man and the Jews. While in Jerusalem for a feast, Jesus meets a man He may have seen many times before during His visits to Jerusalem. This man was a regular visitor at the pool called Bethesda, hoping for a miraculous healing of his infirmity.

Jesus spoke to the infirmed man first by asking him if he wanted to be healed. The man responded to Jesus by revealing his need for someone to lower him into the pool when it stirred. For if he could get in the water at that time, he believed that he could be healed. One can sense in this man's voice a real plea for help. Jesus responded by healing the man completely.

This man showed no faith toward Jesus whatsoever, either before or after the healing. He never entered into dialogue with Jesus and he never thanked Him for being healed. Jesus later met him in the temple and brought up the sin issue and this man's responsibility. But the man rejected Jesus' spiritual-moral thrust by turning from Jesus to the Jews. Verse 15 says that the man departed from Jesus and told the Jews that Jesus was the one who made him well. He "tattled" to please the Jews.

The Jews responded negatively to this healing because Jesus did it on the Sabbath. I have a hunch that this incident would not have been received as badly by them had it been anyone but Jesus. Yes, they were legalistically wrapped up in their self-made traditions and missed the wonderment of God's healing power, but the One who did the Sabbath "breaking" was the same one who overturned their money tables and exposed their profiteering at Gentile expense. If they felt threatened by the temple clearing, they surely felt more threatened by Jesus' fight to take back the Sabbath from their cold, heartless traditions. They saw what Jesus did as a threat to their religious status. They made the rules that every "righteous" Jew was to fulfill on the Sabbath, and to have Jesus act openly

against them was perceived as antagonistic. They hated Him so much they desired to kill Him. It can be clearly seen that Jesus' first encounter with these men did not result in soul searching, but in resentment toward Jesus for His meddlesome behavior.

Jesus in verses 42-47 pinpoints why the Jews reacted to Him the way they did. When the purpose or goal is wrong or evil, good advice sounds bad. Or, when bad advice sounds good the purpose is wrong. Jesus exposes the Jew's purpose as evil and selfish. He exposes their lack of love toward God (v. 42), their rejection of God's ultimate Representative (v. 43), their arrogant pride (v. 44), their disobedience to the meaning of the law they professed (v. 45), and their settled unbelief in O. T. truth (which excluded them from receiving N. T. truth (v. 38, 46-47) spoken by Jesus). True unbelief is not only non-belief, but also adherence to wrong belief. These Jews believed in their own rules and traditions, their own importance, their own honor, their own interpretations of Scripture. Jesus represented a threat to all of these beliefs; either the beliefs had to go or Jesus did. Verses 16 and 18 reveal their choice; Jesus had to go!

Verses 19-41 are absolutely awesome. Many believers have read these verses throughout the church age and have been blessed as they are enlightened to see their Lord's majesty. Jesus claims to be God's Son. God's literal Son! Jesus' Sonship is special. His Sonship makes Him equal with God, His Father. The Pharisees understood what He was claiming. It shocked and infuriated them. But that was not all Jesus claimed. He also claimed to be the Doer of God's perfect will, the Possessor of resurrection power, the Possessor and Dispenser of eternal life, and the Fulfillment of the Old Testament mentality and prophecies.

One must ask oneself, "Why did Jesus reveal such truth to unbelievers?" Why not His disciples? I think the answer, primarily, lies in what the Jews said in verse

18: " ... also said God was His Father, making Himself equal with God." What Jesus said in verses 19-41 was said to clear all doubt from the Jews' minds about whether or not Jesus really claimed equality with God. Jesus did claim such equality, and He wanted the Jews to know it. And once they knew they became obligated to yield their authority to a higher authority, Jesus Christ Himself. Faint belief would have been challenged toward further investigation of Jesus, but the Jews did not even have this belief. Their unbelief was educated unbelief, the most dangerous kind. They were sinking into total hardheartedness! It will not be long before they actually kill Jesus.

John 6: Jesus the Bread of Life

John chapter 6 records five groups or individuals that react to Jesus. Some of the reaction concerns what He did and some concerns what He said. The five are: the multitude, the Jews, the disciples, Peter, and Judas.

Chapter 6 begins by stating that "a great multitude followed [Jesus] (across the Sea of Galilee) because they saw His signs which He performed on those who were diseased." This multitude was following Jesus because of His healing deeds. They wanted to see and experience more. They were considering Him for a position of leadership among them (as we shall read later), but still more examination was needed.

Jesus saw them coming to the mount and out of compassion considered their need for physical sustenance. But as Jesus always did, He reacted with purpose. Jesus wanted to feed the multitude but also wanted to teach and draw a stronger faith from His disciples. To accomplish these purposes, He asks the disciples a simple question. "Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat?" Philip and Andrew answered Jesus' question literally and concretely. They had limited and inadequate resources to meet the need. There was no earthly way to feed these

people. Philip, Andrew and the other disciples wanted to help the people, you can sense it in their voices as they essentially told Jesus, "Lord, we do not have enough to help them."

Jesus acted authoritatively. "Make the people sit down." He then took what He had and created the solution to meet the need. He miraculously provided food enough to feed the multitude, over 5,000 people. And had enough leftover to fill 12 baskets with barley bread.

The multitude was impressed. This man Jesus can get the job done, and He even has access to God's ear in a special way! Any doubt they had before was erased, Jesus is the leader they wanted. " With Jesus as our King, how can we fail to break Rome's yoke over us. How can we fail with one who can heal the sick and command the material world to produce at His word." The people had found their King, now all they had to do is tell Him of their decision.

Jesus knew their intention and did not accept it as an adequate faith response. Jesus reacts the same way He did in John 2:23-25. He did not join Himself to them. For Jesus to unite with these king-seekers would mean that God is willing to save in response to this type of faith and motivation. He is not! God demands true faith commitment to Him in a personal way, through Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:17-21), before the blessings that are 'attached' to His presence become a reality for a particular person. And make no mistake, God is after individuals before He is after a nation! Individuals first, nation second! These people did not understand that truth. God is after heart affection not political power, not mere political monarchy. He does not want to show those pesky, insufferable earthlings who the boss is, He wants to show those He created with His own hands that He loves them and wants to teach and lead them for their benefit.

Jesus does not turn away in disgust but teaches them where their faith is falling short of the faith God requires. He tells them point blank in v. 29 that they

must believe spiritually (v. 27) in Him. In v. 32-33, He relates the receiving-believing with spiritual needs. Humans are not spiritually self-sufficient (v. 44, 65). To believe in Jesus is to know this of oneself. Jesus is the Bread of Life! We can make no such bread ourselves!

The Jews resisted Jesus' teaching and murmured among the crowd against Jesus' claims. They were not 'in-touch' with their true inner needs because of their prideful self-sufficiency, and so found no hope in Jesus' references to spiritual bread and water. One has to know he is lost before he will accept a rescuer. The Jewish leaders saw themselves as the rescuers and the Jewish masses as the lost ones in need of them. Who was Jesus to not acknowledge them and give them the respect they deserved?

Verse 66 records that most of those following Him "went back and walked with Him no more." Jesus then turns to His closest followers, the twelve, and asks, "Will you also go away?" Peter, answering for all but Judas Iscariot, shows real faith, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that you are the Christ, the Son of the living God." The eleven, imperfect as their faith was, knew Jesus was for real and that He had the ability to give them eternal life. That was enough for them. They would keep following Jesus.

Judas also stayed. But his staying was for other than spiritual reasons. He recognized Jesus as someone special. All the talk about "I am the Bread," and "I came down from heaven," that troubled so many others did not bother him greatly. He saw in Jesus his ticket to wealth and power. He would stick it out. When Jesus rose to power-- after all how can someone with the power to heal the sick, make wine from water, feed the 5,000, cast out demons, and more, not rise to power--he wanted to be there with Him.

John 7: Jesus the True Messiah

Many things that could be written about the people mentioned in this chapter would be repetitious of previous chapters. But two verses stand out as most able to teach us about the nature of unbelief, verses 17 and 23.

Verse 17 hits on one of the most important principles of true biblical learning and sanctification. The will is bound by the mind. The will in itself does not have the capacity for hearing, learning, or thinking. Two major implications emerge: 1) The will should not be approached independently of the mind. This is why you never will read in the Bible of any prophet or teacher making mere emotional appeals that press for immediate action. Some truth, historical or doctrinal, is placed before the listener first before action is encouraged. God never subverts His creatures' capacities. False prophets and teachers do! 2) A rebellious will sustains itself with wrong beliefs and consequently rejects truth in order to maintain its independence. Often people hold tightly to incorrect (not correct), wrong (not righteous and moral), and false (not true) beliefs not simply because they are mistaken or victims of bad teachers, but because they do not want to believe what is correct, right, or true due to personal self-interest in and prior commitment to independence from God.

After mentioning doctrine in verse 16, and its source, Jesus says this in verse 17: "If anyone wants to do His will he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority." Anyone who has received certain previous teachings will receive His words now! Those previous teachings are the words of Moses (v. 19). As is the biblical pattern, Jesus presents the truth before He makes an appeal to the will (v. 22-24). He tells them to judge righteously. Paraphrasing, "If you have problems with My personal claims and are confused about the conflict between Pharisaic claims concerning the Sabbath and My own, I ask you to look at the Scriptures yourselves and

notice why it was given to Israel in the first place. Judge according to good judgment, using your own minds, and you will see that what I am saying is true. Doing good has always been allowed on the Sabbath!"

In verse 23, Jesus exposes their wrong definition of good. They valued formalistic ritual over compassion. Jesus completes His point (v. 24) by exhorting them to move their religion from outward legalism to inward righteousness. The reaction of the people showed their rebellious spirit. Their wrong belief was used to push the truth away. They had a faulty image of the Messiah. They wanted a military leader. They got the Shepherd. They wanted political power for Israel and relief from the yoke of Rome, not spiritual redemption from Jehovah. He was not what they wanted. They rejected Him!

John 9: Jesus Restorer of Spiritual Sight

As a result of Jesus' healing of the blind man, the blind man himself, his parents, and the Pharisees show different faith responses. Let us look at the response of the parents first. They know that what happened to their son was real. Others might doubt the authenticity of this miracle but they cannot. Yet, their joy was restrained because they feared the Jewish leaders. Verses 22-23 tell us what they were afraid of-excommunication from the synagogue. As church is a place for status or socializing for many, so the synagogue was an important social place for them. They were probably respected members and had many friends there. All of which could be lost if they followed Jesus. Their nearness to the synagogue kept them away from Jesus.

The Pharisees also showed what kept them from Jesus. Verse 16 is revealing: "This man is not from God, because He does not keep the Sabbath." The religious authority the Pharisees had centered on the Sabbath. It was then that their input, in the form of rules and regulations, was most felt. The Sabbath rules

were their distinctives, what set them apart from others. To attack the rules was to attack them personally. Their self-image and sense of self-worth were wrapped up in being "the Pharisees, leaders of the Sabbath." The religious leaders who were most opposed to Jesus because of their love of status and prestige, were almost destined to be legalists and rule enforcers. Their pride had to cling to false belief to sustain itself. Tenacious unbelief is always grounded in self-centered ambition and pride. The mind with its reasoning power remains capable. But the will refuses to allow it to believe!

Ordinary people who saw this healing admitted the obvious. "How can a man who is a sinner do such things?" They saw the contradiction. The Pharisees' corruption made them blind to the truth, the truth spoken first by Moses and then Jesus. The formerly blind man also indicted the Pharisees. "Why, this is a marvelous thing, that you do not know where He is from, and yet He has opened my eyes!" He continues to 'teach' the Pharisees by pointing out that in Israel's past God heard worshippers, and since God obviously hears this man He must be from God. Instead of acknowledging the truth of what the man was saying they belittled him for trying to teach them.

The blind man had a totally different response to Jesus. He was a beggar. A life as a beggar has the potential to make one wise and sensitive to kindness and compassion. Giving to someone in need is what is good. Jesus gave him physical sight and he knew this was good. He could not understand why the Pharisees could not see it, too. For him, good deeds are people-centered; to the Pharisees good deeds are rule-centered. The formerly blind man received Jesus and honored Him. Physical sight sees the face of Jesus; spiritual sight sees Jesus as Son of God, personal Lord and Savior.

John 10: Jesus the True Shepherd

Jesus has talked so far of being the spiritual thirst quencher, bread for spiritual sustenance, healer, judge, giver of life, forgiver of sins, the Son of God, the light of the world, and the great I AM, but these have only been hints concerning the complete nature of the living faith He seeks in men. To teach the end of faith, Jesus describes Himself as a Shepherd, the kind of shepherd who cares about and cares for his sheep, who is trusted by the sheep under His charge, and whose presence sets his sheep at ease.

Verses 1-18 describes an intimate relationship between Jesus and His true followers (v. 4). The relationship described in these verses stir up mental pictures of a shepherd carrying a wounded lamb across the back of his neck or in his arms, a shepherd talking to the sheep each morning as the flock leaves the sheepfold, and a shepherd who gathers the sheep together and puts them behind him as he confronts the wolf who is attempting to devour one of his precious lambs.

Some who were listening to Jesus were touched by the tenderness of His words, and saw a complete contradiction between Jesus' words and deeds and the appraisal of those who describe Jesus as having a demon. "These are not the words of one who has a demon." Demons don't talk like Jesus. Jesus yearns to hug His sheep while demons yearn to devour them. Sheep are very skittish animals and tend to trust only those they know well, chiefly the chief shepherd. When the chief shepherd speaks they listen, when he calls they come. The Jews were of a different fold, and that is why they did not listen to Jesus.

Jesus in verses 28-30 made sure His dissenters knew He was talking about the spiritual and eternal reality of relationship with God: "And I give them eternal life....I and my Father are one." Jesus is talking about union with God. If the Jews had a longing to be near Jehovah, who created their nation, they would have

groaned with desire to Jesus' words of spiritual intimacy. They didn't! Their faith was superficial and academic.

Jesus claims a special relation to the Father and points to the works He is doing as indicators of the validity of His message. In all honesty, Jesus' message was hard to fathom. What we know now as the Incarnation because of several thousand years of hindsight, these people had no idea of. Think about it, God Incarnate! What an awesome thought, what a Messiah! Jesus knew the uniqueness of such a claim to these monotheistic Jews. That is why He said, "...though you do not believe Me, believe the works, that you may know and believe that the Father is in Me and I in Him." Jesus' offer of fellowship with God through Himself was rejected. And not just snubbed but scoffed at with hatred. How sad the Savior must have felt.

Chapter 10 concludes by saying that "many believed in Him." Because this chapter stresses personal relationship between shepherd and flock, I think the believing by the "many" was real, immature yes, but real. They were receiving Jesus as Shepherd not just as military ruler and deliverer. To believe at this point is to receive Him personally as a sheep receives his or her own chief shepherd. It is to be a sheep in the Master's flock!

John 11: Jesus the Resurrection and the Life

We have seen in the first ten chapters of John that the Jews have rejected Jesus. They see Him as a blasphemer (10:33) on the basis of calling Himself God's Son, "the son of God" (10:36). Jesus recognized the height of His claim and allowed for honest misunderstanding on the part of His hearers (10:34-38) but held them to honest appraisal of His works. For the works pointed to Who He was. Jesus' teachings have reached awesome dimensions. He is not just an ordinary man who is blessed by God in a unique way, but Son of the Living God,

equal with God! He has done many marvelous things to verify the truth of what He says about Himself, but in chapter 11 He is about to give the ultimate revelation of His power and person.

Matthew 9:2-6 describes a strategy Jesus often uses to reinforce something He said. He tells a man that his sins are forgiven and then proceeds to heal him of paralysis. In John 6, He feeds the 5,000, and then claims to be the Bread of Life. He connects a spiritual truth about Himself with a miraculous act that verifies the truthfulness of His words. In John 11:25-26, He claims the power to raise the dead. "I am the resurrection, and the life: He that believes in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever lives and believes in Me shall never die." The raising of Lazarus (v 43-44) verifies His words!

Some who previously had not believed, believed because of the raising of Lazarus. This deed of Jesus confirmed everything He claimed for Himself up to this point. Many could no longer say "no" to Jesus. "But some of them went away to the Pharisees and told them the things Jesus did. Then the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered a council and said, 'What shall we do? For this man works many signs, If we let him alone like this, everyone will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation.'" Even this great miracle does not change hardened unbelief.

Remember an important principle: rebellious unbelief will seek out and unite itself to foolish and even immoral ideas in order to continue to reject the truth. What would previously have seemed unthinkable becomes acceptable. The mind, however, needs to justify and live with itself. It therefore seeks self-justification, a rationale for continuing the present course of action. Caiaphas (v. 49-52) gives them the rationale they were seeking. "We can save our nation and our places in it if we eliminate Jesus. Killing him might be regrettable, but necessary for the health and safety of Israel." Verse 53 records, "Then from that

day forth they took counsel together to put him to death." Armed with the self-justification they sought, their true desire could be realized. Eliminate Jesus, even if it meant killing him.

Jesus recognized the finality of the unbelief: "Therefore Jesus no longer walked openly among the Jews...." Though these plotted against Jesus, the end would come on His terms and in His timing. These men were hardened in their unbelief. They had seen divine revelation and rejected it. Even the resurrection of a dead man could not turn them from their commitment to unbelief.

John 12: Jesus Worthy of Worship

This chapter, as well as the last 10 verses of chapter 11, records the climax of unbelief. John records the opposition Jesus encountered from the very start of His public ministry-the cleansing of the temple. Those that had special interests to protect (especially the Pharisees) opposed Jesus from the start of His ministry to the finish. Nothing Jesus did changed their hearts or minds. Chapter 12 records the culmination of their unbelief. Hopeless unbelief exists in the presence of full revelation. Jesus during His earthly ministry did all He could do, while still respecting created capacities and rights to choose, to provoke faith. The ultimate sign was the raising of Lazarus and not only did it not provoke faith in them but it hardened their hearts instead.

The same sunshine, water, and soil that produce good plants also produce weeds, tares, and thistles. To put it in John's language, the same signs that are meant to provoke and strengthen faith strengthen unbelief. The wrong beliefs that have served to bolster rebellious unbelief become more deep-seated. For example, Pharisaic unbelief moved from religious and economic exploitation, legalistic Sabbatism, and hyper-criticalism to bearing false witness and murder.

Why? So that they could maintain their power and status within Israel. Unbelief becomes hardened when truth is rejected (v. 40)!

Verses 44-50 represent the final public teaching of Jesus. They touch on all the important aspects of Jesus' life and mission, as well as reveal His heart's disposition. Jesus' whole life was centered on doing the will of the Father. Jesus was not an automaton. He chose to fulfill the father's commands because they are life. Jesus valued life. His whole mission was to bring men and women to God for reconciliation. If they will not come, it will not be because they are not welcome it will be because they choose not to. Jesus provided the way. The Holy Spirit provides the strength. The choice is ours whether we take it!

There was a major faith contrast in this chapter between Mary and Judas. Mary, sister of Lazarus, showed gratitude and love for Jesus. She saw the love He had for her and Lazarus not only because of Lazarus' raising but also as Jesus mourned with her grief at the loss of her brother. Mary loved Jesus for it. Jesus understood that. And when she poured expensive oil on His feet and wiped it off with her hair, He accepted it as an act of worshipful devotion and gratitude. Jesus also tells us that there was more to Mary's act than just thankfulness. Mary somehow understood that Jesus' mission included death. Mary showed her love and devotion to Jesus the kind Shepherd, not Jesus the military deliverer. Jesus may not be freeing her from Rome's domination but she believed He would free her from her sin and was the Resurrection and Life to all who believed. And that was enough for Mary. Jesus tenderly accepted her worship, unlike the thousands He turned away because of their false motives and unbelief.

Judas Iscariot, however, did not see what Jesus saw. Judas could only see the value of the oil and considered it a wasteful act. Judas was a thief; he saw his profits dripping to the floor. His heart was hard to true spiritual issues. While God

was praising, he was condemning! How ironic it is that the Righteous One finds it in His heart to accept the heartfelt offering of Mary, but a filthy sinner can only condemn her. Both Judas and the Pharisees were exposed to Jesus' miracles. They had every opportunity to believe but their hidden agendas kept them away from Jesus. And as the Gospel of John progresses those hidden agendas are revealed, until it comes down to the choice of giving up the selfish purposes or giving up Jesus. Judas and the Pharisees chose to give up Jesus!