



# VILLAGE BIBLE CHURCH SUGAR GROVE CAMPUS

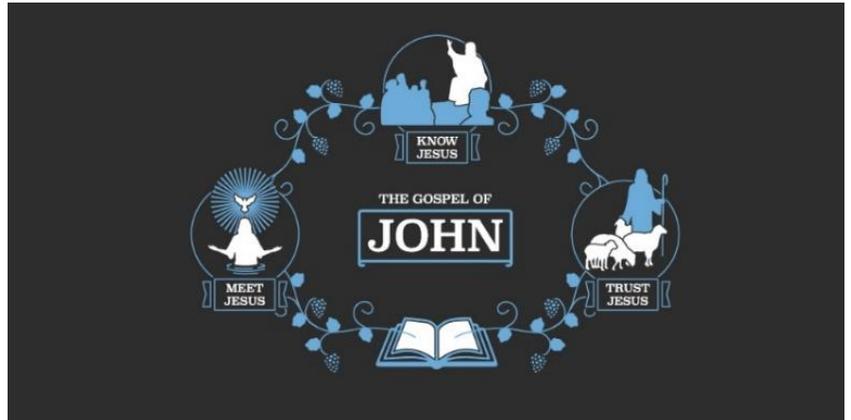
## I'll Believe It When I See It!

### The Gospel of John

#### John 12:20–50

Tim Badal | March 13, 2022

If you haven't already, please turn in your Bible to the book of John. We're in a series we've entitled "The Gospel of John," looking at the life and ministry of Jesus through the eyes of His best friend, the Apostle John. John wants us to meet Jesus and learn about Him, in order that we might believe in Him, because we can see Him for what He is and experience Him in greater measure.



We've been in John 12 for a couple weeks now; this chapter serves as a transition for the entire book. The first 11 chapters in John span about three and half years of Jesus' ministry, but now with John 12, everything slows down. This is because the events going forward are very significant.

In our verses today we encounter Jesus' last interaction with the public. After this, there will be no more public declarations, no more demonstrations of His power, no more public interactions with the crowds. In John 13 we'll find Jesus turning His attention to the disciples. Then in the rest of book we'll follow Jesus through His last week on earth.

As we'll see, the Jewish people—who had been around Jesus for quite some time—hadn't really been listening to what He told them. They weren't seeing Him as clearly as they should have. They remained skeptical about His claims about Himself. Today we also live in a skeptical world. Now, as then, people are saying, "I'll believe it when I see it." Our skepticism isn't all bad. It helps us be careful about empty promises and phony products that we encounter. Have you ever been with a friend who's told you about their great vacation? Maybe they went to the Grand Canyon and have said, "You've got to see that. It will change your life." You might be skeptical and say, "It's just a hole in the ground. How great is that? I'll believe it when I see it."

For those who are parents, you've heard your children say, "My room is clean," then probably your response to them is, "I'll believe it when I see it." Still others are skeptical when advertisers make promises about their products. I love this one: "Lose 20–45+ pounds in 40 days, guaranteed." Who wants to sign up for that? I think it is liposuction with a shop vac. Good luck with that. Right away we say, "I'll believe it when I see it."

Let's get more serious. How about you Bears fans out there? We've heard it over and over again. There's a press conference, and we're told, "We're hiring newer, smarter people; these guys are going to show us how we can beat the Packers, how we can actually go to the playoffs." Chicago is the only place where football ends in December, but these guys still try to convince us that they know what they're doing. All of Chicago responds, "We'll believe it when we see it."

So let me ask this. For the last half year, you've heard us talk about Jesus. We've seen Him do miracles. We've seen Him do things we never imagined. The people of Israel had had front row seats to all He had done. You would have thought everyone would have believed Him by now. Many of them had actually watched Jesus raise Lazarus from the dead.

We would say, "If I had been there, if I had seen what they saw, I would believe." Yet even after three and half years of Jesus doing impossible things, notice what we read in verse 37: *"Though [Jesus] had done many signs before them, they still did not believe in him."*

We naturally respond, "How could you have seen Jesus heal people who were born lame and blind, raise people from the dead, yet not believe? How could you have watched Jesus multiply loaves and fishes, enough to feed thousands of people, yet not believe? How could Jesus have walked on water and all those other things, yet you still don't believe?"

Just like in that day, people in our day are skeptics. As we'll see in this passage today, the road to believing is through our eyes. Six different times in our text we'll see people using their eyes or a derivative of the word see. John wants us to know that if we are going to believe, we need to see Jesus for Who He is, what He has done and what He promises to do in our lives. If we could see these things, then we would believe. What we'll discover is that even though the people in Jesus' day had eyes, they were not able to see well enough to believe. Why was this so? Seeing is the difference between blindness and believing.

## Four symptoms of blindness

In verses 37–41, John quotes the prophet Isaiah, telling his readers that 700 years before Christ came, this response would happen:

<sup>38</sup> "Lord, who has believed what he heard from us, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?" <sup>39</sup> Therefore they could not believe. For again Isaiah said, <sup>40</sup> "He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, lest they see with their eyes, and understand with their heart, and turn, and I would heal them." <sup>41</sup> Isaiah said these things because he saw his glory and spoke of him.

Isaiah was prophesying that the day would come when the Messiah would appear and the people of Israel would be given a front row seat to His life, yet there would be something that would keep them from seeing Him for Who He truly was. That is true for us today; there are things in our lives that prevent us from clearly seeing Jesus. Because of this, we will miss out on the full blessing of knowing Him and experiencing all He has for us.

### Your priorities are out of whack.

The first thing that causes blindness or is a symptom of blindness is that your priorities are out of whack. You're living differently from the way God intends you to live. Our text opens in the setting of the Feast of the Passover. Verse 20: *"Now among those who went up to worship at the feast were some Greeks."* We read this in verse 19 last week: *"So the Pharisees said to one another, 'You see that you are gaining nothing. Look, the world has gone after him.'" Jesus' popularity had gone beyond the Jewish nation to the world of the Gentiles, including the Greeks. Verse 21: "So these [Greeks] came to Philip...and asked him, 'Sir, we wish to see Jesus.'"*

What they said here is worth highlighting, because this should be our daily priority. We should say to God each morning, "I wish to see Jesus." When we say that, we're saying, "I want to enjoy and engage with the Savior of the world." But that isn't always the case, is it? Look at verse 25: *"Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life."*

There's a war going on inside us. We have the opportunity to see Jesus in His fullness. That's choice number one. Choice number two is to seek fullness, joy, peace and success on our own terms. But if you long to live life according to your terms, you'll lose it. However, if you're willing to experience Jesus and essentially die to yourself, then you'll be able to experience the abundant eternal life Christ longs to give you. This is a battle and we have to make a decision.

I love what Pastor Greg Laurie says about this:

This flies in the face of conventional wisdom. "He who loves his life will lose it"—this seems so hard to understand, so unnatural and so impossible. But when you stop and think about it, it makes complete sense. Think of all the people who are trying to live life to its fullest but are going about it the wrong way. They think it's ridiculous to wait until marriage to engage in sexual activity. If you're married and the thrill is gone, spice it up. Have an affair, they say. If your spouse finds out, just terminate the marriage and move on. If you want to get ahead in school, just cheat here and there, but don't get caught. If you want to get a good job, exaggerate about your experience on that resume. File that false claim to get an insurance payout. If someone bothers you, sue them. The list goes on and on, and so do the repercussions.

Jesus revealed what they were searching for, that is, the meaning of life. But God's wisdom says that if you love your life, you will lose it, and if you live for yourself, you will never really find yourself. God's plan for you to find meaning, purpose and yes, happiness, is this: lose your life to find it. What that means is you become second and Jesus becomes first.

If we will get our priorities set in that order, we will see a whole lot more of Jesus than we do right now.

## You push away clear signs from God.

The second symptom of blindness is that we push away the clear signs of God. Jesus said that after all He's done, the people still did not believe. It wasn't because He hadn't given them enough reasons to believe. John says in verse 37, *"Though he had done so many signs before, they still did not believe in him."* In spite of the mountain of evidence, the people were not convinced.

Why not? How could they have seen so many things and still say, "We don't buy this"? The answer is that they pushed God away. God would do something, but they would explain it away. Jesus would speak, but they wouldn't listen. As a result, the visible evidences of God went right past them. You might think that was crazy. All of us have said at one point or another, "If I had been there, surely I would believe. My faith would be strong." But what we've read gives us a clear indication that this wouldn't have been true for us, any more than it was true of those people.

Then on this final day of Jesus acting and speaking in front of the crowds, we read these words beginning in verse 28:

<sup>28</sup> Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven: "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again." <sup>29</sup> The crowd that stood there and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, "An angel has spoken to him."

The people were really curious about whether Jesus was in fact the Messiah. They kept asking Jesus for another sign. So Jesus prayed to His Father, *"Glorify your name."* Then from heaven, God Himself spoke ten words. Why is that number significant? Because Israel had always looked to a previous generation, wanting what they had experienced. The Jewish people back then had been given what they called "the ten words"—what we call the Ten Commandments. Every Jew longed for an opportunity to hear the voice of God. In fact, this is one of four times in all the New Testament when there was even a mention of God speaking audibly to people. So here they were, getting exactly what they wanted. But when God spoke the ten words, they said to each other, "Is there a storm coming? Did someone hear an angel speak?"

You would think that after hearing a voice from God, a revival would have broken out. But John doesn't tell us anything about someone believing. What's wrong with these people? My goodness. Open your eyes. Clean out your ears. God is moving.

Can I just tell you this? Many of us, because we're busy doing our own thing our own way, are missing the moving of God each and every day. We go to bed dead to the world. We wake up and the world is still in its place. One inch farther from the sun, or one inch closer, and we'd freeze or fry. God has held it in its perfect place. We've got just enough oxygen, just enough carbon dioxide in this thing we call the atmosphere; any deviation from that would cause us to die. But God's put it all in place.

We've seen God protect us. We could get ourselves in all kinds of struggles and God will always be there. Even when our enemies seek to hurt us, what man intended for harm God uses for good. God is moving and interacting with our lives and in the lives around us. I hope you're hearing the Word of God thundering to you, "This is My Son Jesus; believe in Him. Do what He says."

Some of you have already checked out. You've already moved on. You're thinking, "He's not even at his second point and lunchtime is coming." You see, God is always moving, but because so many of us have gunk in our eyes, we're blinded from the truth. We're missing what God is doing. We think, "If I could just hear a voice from heaven..." Listen, that won't help any if you're blind. So open your eyes to see where God is moving all around you.

## You seek to protect your comforts.

There are a couple more symptoms of our blindness. Third, you seek to protect your own comforts. Look now at verses 41–42: *"Isaiah said these things because he saw his glory and spoke of him. Nevertheless, many even of the authorities believed in him, but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it, so that they would not be put out of the synagogue."*

John was probably speaking specifically here about two individuals: Nicodemus, whom we've met a couple times already and we'll see again later on, and Joseph of Arimathea. These men were part of the religious establishment and we believe they were on a journey toward God. Even though they eventually arrived at a full commitment, in this moment they weren't fully able to see Jesus for Who He was. Basically it seems that their worldly status prevented them from following Him. Let's face it: to be cast out of the synagogue was a really big deal. They would lose their standing in the community. They risked losing family and friends. They might even have had to forfeit their house and property. There would not be much left to live for.

These things can become more important to us as well. These are the things that provide our comfort and security, as well as that of our families. How well are you seeing Jesus? Will you seek Him, even if it costs you some of your status and popularity? Even if people begin to speak negatively about you, are you willing to profess Christ? Or are you too busy protecting your comforts. Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea were too busy trying to protect their lives, not realizing what that was costing.

### **You seek others' praise instead of God's.**

Finally, look at verse 43: *"They loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God."* This theme of glory needs to be thought about as well. It's mentioned six times in our text. The reason we want to see Jesus is because when we do, we will glorify Him. That's the only response we'll have; we'll talk about this more in a moment.

If we live to keep our lives and in the process lose them, we're living for the glory and applause of others. Yet if we actually are able to see Jesus, we realize that everything is about Him. Pastor Josh Moody put it this way:

The glory and approval of people is infinitely disappointing and ultimately murderous. It's far less satisfying than the all-surpassing glory of the eternal One. To hear one word of praise from Him is worth more than a lifetime of approval from this world. In the end, we all must make the same choice: are we seeking man's glory or God's? Are we seeking man's definition of greatness or God's? Are we seeking man's praise and approval or God's? Man's standard of success or God's? There may be times when a lack of opposition and a comfortable life hide the clarity and the necessity of this choice. We all have to decide whose approval we would rather have: that of Jesus or that of other people.

In this passage, God is doing an eye exam. He wants to know how much you see of His Son. Are there some cataracts in your eyes? Is there some cloudiness that doesn't allow you to see Jesus? Could it be you need to rinse something out of your eyes and wipe it away? Whatever is keeping you from seeing Jesus—whether it's your priorities being out of whack, you're pushing away the clear signs of God, you're protecting your comforts, you're seeking others' praise instead of God's—God is saying, "This is your last chance."

This was the last opportunity these people would have to hear directly from Jesus. From this point on, Jesus was with His disciples or He was on the road to Calvary.

Similarly, today may be your last chance to hear what it means to see Jesus. You may think you can wait until tomorrow, but Isaiah tells us that the longer we wait, the harder it is to believe. You can put it off, but it gets more and more difficult as you wait. This is called God's "judicial blindness." It's not that God is blinding people capriciously or that He likes doing it. Rather, it's simply the truth that the more you choose to live for yourself, the harder it is to climb out of that hole. Today, God is speaking through His Word. He's showing you Jesus, saying, "Wipe the gunk from your eyes, because if you don't do it today, tomorrow may be too late. It will be too hard."

That's why Jesus says in verses 44–46, *"Whoever believes in me, believes not in me but in him who sent me. And whoever sees me sees him who sent me. I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness."* Then back in verse 35 He also says, *"The light is among you for a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you."*

## **Believing happens when you see Jesus.**

Are you willing to see Jesus today as He wants you to see Him? You can go from blindness to believing. When you believe, God gives sight to see two things.

### **You can see Jesus sacrificing for your salvation.**

Look at verses 32–33: *"And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." He said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die.*" Jesus is saying, "Look to me when I'm lifted up." What does that mean?

To be lifted up means two things. First, it speaks of His execution when He was lifted up on to the cross to die. Why should we look there? Because when we look to the cross, we see perfection. When we look to the cross, we are reminded of our sin. When we look to the cross, we are humbled and reminded of the penalty for our rebellion against God.

When we look to the cross we see the price that was paid. When we look to the cross, we recognize that any priority less than dying to ourselves and taking up our cross daily will not work in the Kingdom of God. When we look to the cross and see Christ

lifted up, we see the depths and the great demonstration of His love, that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8).

Being lifted up also means Jesus would be lifted up from the earth, and in doing this He would draw all people to Himself. Yet how would people from all nations, tribes and tongues hear? It wasn't when Jesus was executed on the cross. It was when He was exalted by ascending from the earth to the right hand of the Father in heaven. After this happened, Jesus sent His Spirit so that every tribe, nation and tongue could hear about Him and be drawn to Him (Revelation 5:9).

### **You can see Jesus defeating the works of the devil.**

This is a reminder that Jesus is no longer on the cross, but He has been victorious over death and is now interceding for us every day. In this way, Jesus is defeating the works of the devil. When you get a vision of Jesus, sin and temptation cannot overtake you. Have you ever thought about that?

Our flesh and the lusts of the world captivate us. These things look more beautiful to us than Jesus, but they are a lie. We need to fill our sight, our thoughts and our lives with Jesus. When we do that, then and only then will we be able to see that what the devil offers us is garbage.

Listen to me, church. If you aren't looking at Jesus, you will fall for anything. Some of you have fallen into sin and temptation, wondering why you can't get out. Could it be that your gaze is upon the things of this world, not on Jesus Christ? If you want to see the devil defeated, look deeply into the eyes of Jesus.

### **This leads to following in His footsteps.**

What does that do? It involves two things. First, seeing Jesus involves following in His footsteps. Do you want to know how well you're seeing Jesus? Here's what He says in verse 26: *"If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him."*

How will you know how good your eyesight is? Are you following where Jesus is leading? Are you doing what Jesus has told you to do? Do you love like Jesus loves? Do you give like Jesus gives? Do you serve like Jesus serves? Are you speaking as Jesus speaks? Are you acting as Jesus acts? Do you want to know if you've got the 20/20 vision you're seeking? Ask yourself, "How well am I doing at following Jesus?"

### **This leads to giving God the glory.**

Following Jesus involves following Him in one specific way. Jesus said in verse 28, *"Father, glorify your name."* If you want to know if you're seeing Jesus as you should, how are you doing—how am I doing—at glorifying our God? That's why Paul says, *"Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God"* (1 Corinthians 10:31).

That means I have to die to myself. I have to say no to sin. As Jesus glorifies His Father and I become more like Christ, then I will give glory to the God of heaven. As I do that, Jesus says, "I will reveal more and more of Who I am to anyone who will come after Me."

Do you see Jesus this morning? If not, what is keeping you from seeing Him? Find Jesus today. Follow Jesus today, because tomorrow may be too late.