

THE GOSPEL OF

JOHN

Final Notice:
Action
Required!!!

INTRODUCTION

John 12:20-50

A wife opening the mail said to her husband, "The bank says that this is our last notice. Isn't it wonderful that they're not going to bother us anymore?" (Michael Streff, Reader's Digest [5/92])

It's never wise to ignore final notices! That's true of bill collectors, but it's especially true if you ignore God's final notice. You may think that it's wonderful that God won't bother you anymore. But as Paul warned the Athenians (Acts 17:31), "[God] has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead." So when God sends a final notice, it's best to pay attention!

Our text represents Jesus' final notice to the Jews who had not believed in Him. We don't know when He spoke these words. There is nothing here that He has not already said. His words serve as a review of some of the key truths that John's Gospel has emphasized to this point. But these are His last words to unbelieving Israel before He was crucified. The next five chapters are spoken privately to His disciples. Since this is Jesus' final notice, we all should pay attention! He gives four reasons why we should believe in Him. In His words:

Believe in Me because I am one with the Father, I am the light, My words will judge all that reject them, and I speak the Father's commandment that is eternal life.¹

OPEN IT

1. How are you when it comes to paying bills? Always, sometimes, never on time? Which bill do you hate paying the most?

READ IT

John 12:20-50

¹ Sermon by Steve Cole found @ <https://bible.org/seriespage/lesson-70-final-notice-john-1244-50>

EXPLORE IT

2. Who comes looking for Jesus to speak with Him?
3. What happened when Jesus asked the Father to glorify His name?
4. What fulfillment from Isaiah had come true in this passage?
5. Why weren't more people open about their belief in Jesus?

APPLY IT

One of John's major themes is that Jesus is the Savior of the world, not simply the Redeemer of Israel. He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29). "For God so loved the world" (John 3:16). The Samaritans rightly identified Him as "the Savior of the world" (John 4:42). He gave His life for the world, and He gives life to the world (John 6:33). He is the Light of the World (John 8:12). The universal emphasis of John's gospel is too obvious to miss. Jesus will bring the "other sheep" who are outside the Jewish fold (John 10:16; and see 11:51–52). The original text indicates that these Greeks were accustomed to come and worship at the feast." They were not curious visitors or one time investigators. No doubt they were "God-fearers," Gentiles who attended the Jewish synagogue and sought the truth, but who had not yet become proselytes. Gentiles came to see Jesus when He was a young child (Matt. 2), and now Gentiles came to see Him just before His death.²

6. John spoke about Jesus being the Savior for the whole world which included some outside of the house of Israel.(ie. Samaritans, Greeks, Romans). Are you reluctant or skeptical to think someone is beyond the reach of Jesus? What causes these feelings?

² Wiersbe, Warren W.. *The BE Series Bundle: The Gospels: Be Loyal, Be Diligent, Be Compassionate, Be Courageous, Be Alive, and Be Transformed (The BE Series Commentary)*. David C Cook. Kindle Edition.

7. While people can't meet with Jesus physically today, what are some reasons or questions that cause people to seek out the words and teachings of Jesus today? How well do you do at addressing and answering spiritual questions from those around you? How might the church help to improve these skills?

We can commend these Greeks for wanting to see Jesus. The Jews would say, "We would see a sign!" (Matt. 12:38; 1 Cor. 1:22), but these men said, "We would see [have an interview with] Jesus." There is no record that Jesus did talk with these men, but the message that He gave in response contains truths that all of us need. The central theme of this message is the glory of God (John 12:23, 28). We would have expected Jesus to say, "The hour has come, that the Son of man should be crucified." But Jesus saw beyond the cross to the glory that would follow (see Luke 24:26; Heb. 12:2). In fact, the glory of God is an important theme in the remaining chapters of John's gospel (see John 13:31–32; 14:13; 17:1, 4–5, 22, 24).

Jesus used the image of a seed to illustrate the great spiritual truth that there can be no glory without suffering, no fruitful life without death, no victory without surrender. Of itself, a seed is weak and useless; but when it is planted, it "dies" and becomes fruitful. There is both beauty and bounty when a seed "dies" and fulfills its purpose. If a seed could talk, it would no doubt complain about being put into the cold, dark earth. But the only way it can achieve its goal is by being planted. God's children are like seeds. They are small and insignificant, but they have life in them, God's life. However, that life can never be fulfilled unless we yield ourselves to God and permit Him to "plant us." We must die to self so that we may live unto God (Rom. 6; Gal. 2:20).

The only way to have a fruitful life is to follow Jesus Christ in death, burial, and resurrection. In these words, Jesus challenges us today to surrender our lives to Him. Note the contrasts: loneliness or fruitfulness; losing your life or keeping your life; serving self or serving Christ; pleasing self or receiving God's honor.³

8. In the paragraph above we read "there can be no glory without suffering, no fruitful life without death, no victory without surrender." What was Jesus personally speaking about? How are believers to apply this statement to our lives?

³ ibid

9. Jesus uses this word picture to clearly remind us that death is not the end but instead it is the beginning of a new chapter? How does this give you hope for tomorrow and purpose for today?

*He goes on to contrast two people. One of them loves his or her life, and the other hates it, at least as far as this world is concerned (12:25). The one who chooses to cling to life inevitably loses it, but the one who hates his or her life gains eternal life. This is the opposite of what we would expect. We would assume that someone who loves life would protect it by having a good security system, eating a balanced diet, exercising regularly and taking other measures in order to stay healthy and secure. On the other hand, we would assume that someone who hates life will be careless about their personal security, what they eat and other dangers. Why do Jesus' words go contrary to common sense? **It is because he is the life.**⁴*

10. How do we apply the following word of Jesus to our lives as Christ followers "that whoever loves his life will lose it and those who hate what the world offers gain much more?"

⁴ Africa Bible Commentary (p. 3369). Zondervan Academic. Kindle Edition.

Taking up your cross or hating your life in this world is not something you achieve in an emotional moment of spiritual ecstasy or dedication. You never arrive on a spiritual mountain top where you can sigh with relief, “I’m finally there! No more death to self!” Nor are there any shortcuts or quick fixes to this painful process. The need to hate my life or die to self is never finished in this life; it is a daily battle. A. T. Pierson said, “Getting rid of the ‘self-life’ is like peeling an onion: layer upon layer—and a tearful process!”⁵

11. In what ways have you experienced the daily and oftentimes painful process of dying to self? What would you say to a believer that this has never happened in their life?

Blinded by the Light

The key word in this section is believe; it is used eight times. First, John explained the unbelief of the people. They would not believe (John 12:37–38, with a quotation from Isa. 53:1); they could not believe (John 12:39); and they should not believe (John 12:40–41, with a quotation from Isa. 6:9–10).

In spite of all the clear evidence that was presented to them, the Jews would not believe. The “arm of the Lord” had been revealed to them in great power, yet they closed their eyes to the truth. They had heard the message (“report”) and seen the miracles and yet would not believe. When a person starts to resist the light, something begins to change within him, and he comes to the place where he cannot believe. There is “judicial blindness” that God permits to come over the eyes of people who do not take the truth seriously. (The quotation of Isa. 6:9–10 is found in a number of places in the New Testament. See Matt. 13:14–15; Mark 4:12; Luke 8:10; Acts 28:25–27; Rom. 11:8.)

It is a serious thing to treat God’s truth lightly, for a person could well miss his opportunity to be saved. “Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near” (Isa. 55:6).⁶

12. Many of these people had seen Jesus perform a variety of miracles and yet still would not believe. How could someone see such amazing things and still look at Jesus with contempt? What does that say about human nature?

⁵ Sermon by Steve Cole found @ <https://bible.org/seriespage/lesson-67-why-you-should-hate-your-life-john-1224-26>

⁶ Wiersbe, Warren W.. *The BE Series Bundle: The Gospels: Be Loyal, Be Diligent, Be Compassionate, Be Courageous, Be Alive, and Be Transformed (The BE Series Commentary)*. David C Cook. Kindle Edition.

13. How does chronic unbelief make it more and more difficult to ever believe? What do we do for those around us that are stuck in their unbelief?

14. What things did God bring into your life that caused you to trade your unbelief into devotion for Him? What things can we do to bring light to a world of darkness so that others may see?

John turns to one of Israel's great prophets to explain. Quoting Isaiah 53:1, John notes his dismay that many continue to reject Jesus despite clear evidence. Isaiah 53:1 records the prophet Isaiah lamenting that so few received the message that he had been sent to proclaim. Isaiah says, "Who has believed what he has heard from us? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?" So there was a message proclaimed and visible signs of the "arm of the Lord" displayed. And yet, despite the clear and obvious works of the "arm of the Lord," few repented and believed the message Isaiah proclaimed.⁷

15. How can Isaiah's lament regarding the lack of impact on the world around him serve as an encouragement to your own impact in your world today? How are we to balance Jesus' words regarding spiritual blindness here and his words in John 4:35 about "fields being white for harvest"?

⁷ Study notes from Mars Hill Church of Mobile Alabama found @ <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/59624ad517bffc926001fda/t/5e6e230b186dd4593673669f/1584276236294/John+12.36-50+STUDY+GUIDE.pdf>

16. The blindness of the audience didn't deter Isaiah or Jesus from sharing the truth. What are you doing right now to bring light and truth to your world?

Yet even in the midst of the general unbelief, many even among the leaders believed in him (12:42a). But they would not confess their faith for fear they would be put out of the synagogue by the Pharisees (12:42b). To them, such excommunication implied being cut off from fellowship with God and with their fellow Jews. But they were wrong to think so. Believing in Jesus would mean believing in and receiving praise from the one who sent Jesus (that is, God). They were wrong to have preferred to remain in the Pharisees' good books rather than in God's (12:43).⁸

17. How can we be tempted to love the glory that comes from men over that of God? What changes need to be made so that you can live tomorrow for the glory of God and Him alone?

⁸ Africa Bible Commentary (p. 3374). Zondervan Academic. Kindle Edition.

John has shown us the Word, the Son of God, our Lord Jesus, walking, speaking and doing signs so that those who met him then and meet him today might believe. We have seen that some have met him and believed, albeit in seed form; and as we turn the corner of this Gospel from the book of signs to the book of glory—as we move toward the place where the Son of Man will be glorified at the cross—we are called, like John’s first readers, to find our life in him, through faith in him, by receiving his word. The thief has come to steal and kill and destroy, Jesus says to us. But I have come that you might have life, and life to the full. Receive him, follow him, love, obey and enjoy him—and find life in him today.⁹

18. Take some moment and share with your group one thing you are thankful for the grace of Jesus in the present and then share one thing you look forward to experiencing in eternity.

⁹ Moody, Josh. John 1-12 For You: Find deeper fulfillment as you meet the Word (God's Word For You) (p. 207). The Good Book Company. Kindle Edition.

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