

EXPLANATION OF 43RD BIBLEBOOK

JOHN 12 (A.D. 70-95)

INTRODUCTION

John 12 begins the final ministry of Jesus Christ during seven weeks in April and May A.D. 30.

- John 12 to 18 describes his last seven days before his crucifixion.
- John 19 to 21 describes his last forty days on earth, from his crucifixion to his ascension.

John 12:1-50 describes the anointing of Jesus at Bethany, his triumphant entry into Jerusalem, his meeting with the Greeks who sought him and the unbelief of the Jew who rejected him.

OUTLINE

- (I) 12:1-8. Mary anoints Jesus on Saturday evening.
- a. The occasion of the anointment (12:1).
 - b. The anointment in John chapter 12 (12:2-3).
 - c. The anointment in Luke chapter 7.
 - d. Mary and Judas contrasted (12:4-6).
 - e. The purpose of Mary's anointment (12:7-8).
 - f. Mary's deed remembered.
- (II) 12:9-11. Lazarus is also threatened with death.
- (III) 12:12-19. The triumphal entry into Jerusalem on Sunday.
- a. The triumphal entry shows that Jesus is in control of the whole situation.
 - b. The triumphal entry shows that Jesus is the Messiah, the Prince of peace.
- (IV) 12:20-22. The Greeks want to see the living Jesus.
- (V) 12:23-24. But Jesus speaks about his death.
- (VI) 12:25-26. Live the real life by dying to self.
- a. The word 'hating' himself means to prefer his own life less.
 - b. The word 'hating' himself means that there is suffering in service.
- (VII) 12:27-30. God the Father glorifies God the Son.
- (VIII) 12:31-33. Jesus limits Satan's dominion by extending his own kingdom.
- a. The world.
 - b. The prince of this world.
 - c. The word 'cast out'.
 - d. The word 'all'.
- (IX) 12:34. Jesus is the Son of Man.
- a. The Son of Man in the Old Testament.
 - b. The Son of Man in the New Testament.
- (X) 12:35-36a. Jesus is the light. Walk in the light!
- (XI) 12:36b-43. Jesus' summary of Israel's response to him.
- a. The end of the public ministry of Jesus (12:36b).
 - b. The hardening of hearts in the Old Testament.
 - c. The hardening of hearts in the New Testament (12:37-40).
 - d. The hardening of hearts and the regeneration of hearts reveal God's glory (12:41).
 - e. Many leaders in Israel had no genuine and persevering faith in Jesus Christ (12:42-43).
- (XII) 12:44-50. Jesus repeats important sayings.
- a. Light and darkness (12:44-46).
 - b. Salvation and judgement (12:47-48).
 - c. The Son speaks as the Father instructed him (12:49-50).

EXPLANATION

(I) 12:1-8. Mary anoints Jesus on Saturday evening.

a. The occasion of the anointment (12:1).

12:1. Now six days before the Passover, Jesus came (viaa) to Bethany, where Lazarus was (viaa), whom Jesus had raised (viaa) from the dead.

This Passover Feast began on Thursday 14th Nisan (April) A.D. 30. In April Jesus travelled from Ephraim via Jericho (Luke 18:35 – 19:10) to Jerusalem and probably arrived in Bethany six days before the Feast (exclusive the day of arrival), that is on Friday before sunset in order to visit his friends. The caravan of people travelling to the Passover Feast travelled on to Jerusalem and spread the news about Jesus in Jerusalem. Matthew 26:2-5 and Mark 14:1-2 do not say that this meal took place two days before the Passover Feast, but that two days before the Passover Feast Jesus had predicted that he would be crucified and that the Sanhedrin had gathered to plot his death.

After the Sabbath on Saturday evening a dinner was given at the house of Simon the Leper probably in honour of Jesus and Lazarus who had been raised from the dead (12:2). According to the custom in Israel the guests were reclining on couches (13:23) in a U-form around a low table: Jesus, the twelve disciples, Lazarus and Simon¹. Martha served². In the meantime many Jews had started to come from Jerusalem to Bethany in order to see Jesus and the raised Lazarus.

b. The anointment in John chapter 12 (12:2-3).

¹ Mark 14:3

² cf. Mark 14:3

12:2. So they made (viaa) for him (in Jesus' honour) a dinner there. Martha was serving (viaa) while Lazarus was (viaa) one of those reclining (vppn) (at the table) with him.

12:3. Mary, therefore, having taken (vpaa) (an alabaster jar containing about)³ one litra (about 327 gram) a very expensive perfume (ointment) of pure nard, anointed (viaa) the feet of Jesus and wiped (viaa) his feet with her hair. And the house was filled (viap) with the fragrance of the perfume (ointment).

The perfume was made from an aromatic herb that grows high in the Himalaya Mountains and had to be transported over a very long distance. According to Mark 14:3 she broke the jar and poured the perfume over the head of Jesus⁴, but according to John she poured it on the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair. There is no contradiction, because Matthew and Mark say that she poured it over his whole body⁵. Against good fashion of that time, she loosened her hair and used her hair to spread the perfume over his feet. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

c. The anointment in Luke chapter 7.

The anointing of Jesus in John chapter 12 is quite different than the anointing of Jesus in Luke 7:36-50, but it is the same as the event described in Mark 14 and Matthew 26. The event was inserted in the Gospels of Mark and Matthew among events happening on the Wednesday before his crucifixion, because it contrasted Mary's behaviour with that of the Pharisees and Judas.

In Luke 7 they were in the house of Simon the Pharisee, but in John 12 they were in the house of Simon the Leper⁶. In Luke 7 the woman was known as a sinner in the town and our Mary was only introduced later⁷. In Luke 7 the woman wept and kissed the feet of Jesus, but here Mary did not do that. In Luke 7 Jesus rebuked Simon the Pharisee for not welcoming him into his home, but here he sharply rebuked Judas Iscariot for criticising Mary. In Luke 7 Jesus sent the woman away with friendly words, but here he defended Mary's deed of love.

d. Mary and Judas contrasted (12:4-6).

12:4. But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was about to (vppa)(ingressive aorist) betray (vnpa) him, said (vipa),

12:5. "Why⁸ was not this perfume sold (viap) for three hundred denarii and given (viap) to the poor?"

12:6. Now this he said (viaa), not because he was concerned (viia) about the poor, but because he was (viia) a thief and being (the keeper of)(vppa) the money box, he used to take away (viia)(imperfect) the things put into (vppp) (it).

The event contrasts the *generosity* of Mary with the *selfishness* of Judas. Judas Iscariot was the treasurer of the disciples. He considered every action in terms of money and had calculated the value of the perfume: 300 denarii, an amount of one year's wages! With a show of indignation he criticised Mary, feigned that the money had been wasted and could have been given to the poor. Some other disciples were also indignant about the unnecessary waste of money⁹. Wherever Mary looked she met angry glances and looks of shocked disapproval.

e. The purpose of Mary's anointment (12:7-8).

12:7. But Jesus said (viaa), "Leave her alone (vmaa)(imperative); (the reason is) that she kept (vsaa) it for the day of my burial.

12:8. because the poor you always have (vipa) with you, but me you have (vipa) not always."

Only Jesus himself came to Mary's defence. Only Jesus understood her intention. Because Mary broke the jar, verse 7 cannot be understood as if Mary only poured some of the perfume on Jesus and kept the rest for the day of his burial. This translation agrees with Matthew 26:12: "She did it to prepare me for burial" and with Mark 14:8, "She poured perfume on my body beforehand for the preparation of my burial." More than any of the disciples of Jesus, Mary was convinced that the day of the death and burial of Jesus was at hand. She had listened better to Jesus¹⁰. She had probably heard about the many times Jesus had predicted his death (6:52-56; 7:33; 8:21-23; 10:11,15)¹¹. And she had probably heard the threats of the Jewish religious leaders (8:58-59; 9:22; 10:30-31; 11:45-57; cf. 12:10). *Jesus said that Mary had anointed him with a view to his coming death and burial.*

According to Jewish custom, *after* death the body was wrapped with spices in strips of linen. However, Mary wanted to honour Jesus *before* he died, while he was still alive. So she poured the spices out over Jesus as a preparation in advance for burial. She paid tribute to Jesus *before* his death and not as people usually do, *after* his death.

f. Mary's deed remembered.

³ Mark 14:3

⁴ cf. Psalm 23:5

⁵ Mark 14:8

⁶ Mark 14:3

⁷ Luke 10:38-39

⁸ G: dia ti

⁹ Mark 14:4

¹⁰ cf. Luke 10:39

¹¹ Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:33-34

Jesus accepted her costly gift and he predicted that her kind deed would be made known all over the world¹². Of course, Jesus cared for the poor (12:8)¹³, and disapproved of needless wasting. But Mary's deed was not a waste. *It was an act of love towards Jesus, a preparation for the most important death in the history of this world! And it was an act of faith in Jesus' predictions about his death.* Jesus evaluates the spending of money in a complete different way than people generally do!

(II) 12:9-11. Lazarus is also threatened with death.

12:9. Meanwhile a large crowd of Jews came to know (learned)¹⁴ (viaa) that Jesus was (vipa) there, and they came (viaa), not only because of him (Jesus), but also in order that they might see¹⁵ (vsaa) Lazarus, whom he had raised (viaa) from the dead.

12:10. So the chief priests took counsel (decided after previous deliberation)¹⁶ (viad) that they would also kill (vsaa) Lazarus.

12:11. For on account of him many of the Jews were leaving (viia)(Judaism) and were putting their faith (viia) in Jesus.

Many ordinary Jews had heard that Jesus Christ was in Bethany and came to Bethany during the next day, Sunday. They wanted to see a sensation (a man who had been raised from the dead)! Also the chief priests heard about this. They were of the party of the Sadducees, who were liberals and did not believe in miracles like the raising of the dead or the final resurrection. So they made plans to kill Lazarus as well, because on account of him many Jews were *continually* leaving (imperfect tense) Judaism and *continually* putting their faith in Jesus. Note: the Jewish religious leaders, like some modern religions, did not believe in the resurrection of the dead, but they surely believed in killing people! The Bible teaches that people become like the 'god' they worship¹⁷. So the 'god' of these religious leaders must be Satan, because Satan is a murderer from the beginning (cf. 8:44)!

(III) 12:12-19. The triumphal entry into Jerusalem on Sunday.

12:12. The next day the great crowd that had come (vpaa) for the feast, on hearing (vpaa) that Jesus was coming (vipn) to Jerusalem.

12:13. took (viaa) the branches of palm-trees and went out (viaa) to meet him, and they kept on shouting (viia). "Hosanna ("Save us!")!" "Blessed (vprp) is he who comes (vppn) in the name of the Lord!" "The King of Israel!"

12:14. Now Jesus found (vpaa) a young donkey and sat (viaa) (aorist) on it, as it is (vipa) written (vprp).

12:15. "Stop being afraid (vmpn), O Daughter of Zion; Look, your king is coming (vipn), seated (vppn) on a donkey's colt."

12:16. These things his disciples did not understand (know)¹⁸ (viaa) at first, but when Jesus was glorified (viap), then they recalled (viao) that these things were (viia) what was written (vprp) about him and that they had done (viaa) these things to him.

12:17. Now the crowd that was (vppa) with him (in Bethany) when he called (viaa) Lazarus out of the tomb and raised (viaa) him from the dead, kept on testifying (viia)

12:18. and for this reason the multitude went to meet (viaa) him because they had heard (viaa) that he had performed (vnra) this miraculous sign.

12:19. So the Pharisees said (viaa) to one another, "You observe (vipa) that you are gaining (vipa) nothing. Look, the world has gone (viaa) after him!"

The four Gospels record fourteen events during the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. John records six of them. The order of these events may have been the following:

- (1) Matthew 21:1-3,6,7; Mark 11:1-6; Luke 19:29-34. From somewhere between Bethany and Jerusalem Jesus sent two of his disciples ahead to Bethphage, a suburb of Jerusalem, to fetch a young donkey. The owners were probably disciples of Jesus and gave their permission.
- (2) Matthew 21:4,5; Mark 11:7; Luke 19:35; John 12:14-15. The disciples laid their clothes on the donkey and let Jesus sit on it. Matthew and John see this as a fulfilment of the prophecy in Zechariah 9:9. 'Daughter of Zion' refers to Jerusalem and her citizens. Zion was originally a hill fortress of the Jebusites. After David conquered it, it became the fortress of Zion¹⁹. It was situated in the lower south eastern part of the later city of Jerusalem. The first tabernacle stood here²⁰. Later Zion became associated with Mount Moria in the higher north eastern part of the later Jerusalem on which Solomon built the temple²¹. Still later Zion became associated with Jerusalem and its citizens²².

¹² Mark 14:9; Matthew 26:13

¹³ Matthew 11:5

¹⁴ G: ginóskó

¹⁵ G: eidon is second aorist of horaó

¹⁶ G: boulomai

¹⁷ Psalm 115:8

¹⁸ G: ginóskó

¹⁹ 2 Samuel 5:6-7; 1 Chronicles 11:4-5

²⁰ 2 Samuel 6:16; 2 Chronicles 5:2

²¹ 2 Samuel 24:18-19; Psalm 2:6; Isaiah 24:23

²² Isaiah 10:12; Jeremiah 3:14; Zechariah 9:9

Finally, the word 'Zion' gained spiritual significance and became a symbol of God's people, his assembly or congregation on earth²³ and in heaven²⁴: God's elect²⁵.

While a horse is usually associated with war²⁶, a donkey is associated with peace²⁷. Since his first coming, the Messiah has come to drive away human warfare (horses and chariots) and to proclaim peace (in the biblical, spiritual sense) to all the nations on earth and to extend his sovereign rule over the whole earth²⁸, not through politics and the military, but through the Church!

- (3) Matthew 21:8; Mark 11:8; Luke 19:36. Many people from the crowd at Bethany spread their cloaks on the road. Others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. These were visible tokens of paying tribute to a king.
- (4) John 12:17. The people who had seen the raising of Lazarus in Bethany kept on talking about it in Jerusalem. That is why a great number of people in Jerusalem went out of Jerusalem to see Jesus.
- (5) John 12:1,12-13a,18. A great multitude of people in Jerusalem heard that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem. They left the city via the eastern gate with palm branches which they had cut from the trees. The palm tree was a symbol of righteousness²⁹ and a symbol of the joy about the victory of God's people³⁰. The Passover feast was a commemoration of the victory over the Egyptians that had turned God's people into slaves.
- (6) Matthew 21:9; Mark 11:9-10; Luke 19:37-38; John 12:13b. When the crowd from Jerusalem met the crowd coming from Bethany they burst into enthusiastic shouting. One crowd walked in front of Jesus and the other crowd followed him. As they descended down the western slope of the Mount of Olives they (and not the Jewish religious leaders) shouted, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who came in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the king of Israel! " "Hosanna to the Son of David". "Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David." "Peace in heaven and glory in the highest." These words are written in the messianic Psalm 118:19-28. During the Passover Jews sing this song. The word 'hosanna' is in the imperative mood and means, 'Save us!' The crowd was hoping that Jesus would liberate them from the political oppression of the Romans. They had high expectations of an earthly nature. They called Jesus 'the king of Israel' and expected that he would restore the ancient mighty kingdom of David. That expectation revived after Jesus had been raised from the dead³¹.
- (7) Luke 19:39-40. But the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples!" But Jesus answered them, "I tell you, if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out."
- (8) Luke 19:41-44. When Jesus saw the city, he wept over it. He knew that the crowd was only cheering because they were thinking of a political Messiah (cf. 6:15). He said, "If you had only known on this day what would bring you peace – but now it is hidden from your eyes. The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognise the time of God's coming to you." This prophecy in Luke 19:41-44 of Jesus was fulfilled between A.D. 67-70. The Romans besieged Jerusalem and finally destroyed it³².
- (9) Matthew 21:10-11. As Jesus entered Jerusalem the whole city was stirred and everyone wanted to know who he was. The answer came from the crowd, "This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee."
- (10) Matthew 21:14; Mark 11:11a. Jesus went to the temple and healed the blind and the lame. (The cleansing of the temple in Matthew 21:12-13 happened the following day, Monday).
- (11) Matthew 21:15-16. The children in the temple began to shout, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" The high priests and the teachers of the law saw his miraculous signs, but said nothing. Nevertheless, they criticised Jesus for not rebuking the children. Jesus had heard the children and replied, "From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise."
- (12) John 12:19. Full of jealousy and anger the more radical Pharisees said to one another, See, this is getting us nowhere. Look how the whole world has gone after him". 'The world' here does not mean every individual that has lived in human history, but the Jews in Jerusalem. Also the Greeks (non-Jews) were coming to Jesus (12:20-36a)!
- (13) Matthew 21:17; Mark 11:11b. By Sunday evening Jesus and his disciples returned to Bethany.
- (14) John 12:16. Only after the ascension and enthronement of Jesus the disciples understood that his triumphant entry into Jerusalem had fulfilled the prophecy in Zechariah 9:9. At that time the Holy Spirit had already been poured out and the Spirit reminded them of the words of Jesus and their significance (14:26; 16:13-14).

a. The triumphal entry shows that Jesus is in control of the whole situation.

²³ Isaiah 1:27; 40:9

²⁴ Hebrews 12:22

²⁵ Revelation 14:1

²⁶ Exodus 15:1,19,21; Psalm 33:17;76:7; 147:10; Proverbs 21:31; Jeremiah 8:6; 51:21; Zechariah 10:3; Revelation 6:4

²⁷ Judges 10:4; 12:14; 2 Samuel 19:27; Isaiah 1:3; Zechariah 9:9

²⁸ Zechariah 9:10

²⁹ Psalm 92:13

³⁰ Leviticus 23:40; cf. 1 Maccabees 13:51; 2 Maccabees 10:7

³¹ cf. Acts 1:6

³² Luke 21:20-24

The Sanhedrin had not planned to kill Jesus during the Passover Feast, but his triumphal entry into Jerusalem forced them to hasten the execution of their plot. By entering Jerusalem, Jesus shows that he has come to lay down his life voluntarily (10:17-18).

b. The triumphal entry shows that Jesus is the Messiah, the Prince of peace.

His entry into Jerusalem on a donkey was a literal fulfilment of the prophecy in Zechariah 9:9. The people of Jerusalem would see their king coming to them, riding on a donkey. While riding on a horse was associated with war, riding on a donkey was usually associated with peace! By riding on a donkey Jesus shows that he is the Messiah, but not the political and military Messiah of popular Judaism, but the Messiah of the Bible. He shows that he did not come to conquer their political enemies, but that he had come in the interest of peace. He would die to make peace between God and sinful man³³! And would die to make peace between believers coming from different cultural backgrounds³⁴.

(IV) 12:20-22. The Greeks want to see the living Jesus.

12:20. Now there were (viia) some Greeks from those who were accustomed to go up (vppa)(to Jerusalem) in order that they might worship (vsaa) at the feast.

12:21. So they came (viaa) to Philip, the one who (was) from Bethsaida in Galilee, and were making requests (viia) saying (vppa), “Sir, we wish (vipa) to see (vnaa) Jesus.”

12:22. Philip went (vipn) and told (vipa) Andrew; Andrew and Philip went (vipn) and told (vipa) Jesus.

For centuries the Jews had immigrated to surrounding countries or had been exiled to countries far away. There they built synagogues to worship God and to study the Old Testament. Gentiles, who were attracted by the purity of monotheism, began to convert to Judaism. Some Gentiles were circumcised and promised to obey the whole law. They became converts to Judaism (proselytes)³⁵ and shared in all the privileges and responsibilities of Judaism. But other Gentiles were not circumcised and did not keep the ceremonial law. They were called ‘the God-fearing’³⁶. They also came up to Jerusalem three times every year. They were not allowed into the temple, but only in ‘the Court of the Gentiles’³⁷, which was separated from the temple by a literal wall with a sign forbidding non-Jews to go beyond that point! Thus, up to the time of Jesus, the ceremonial law of the Jews still formed ‘the dividing wall of hostility’³⁸ between Jews and Gentiles.

The Greeks, who had come to the Passover Feast, were not Greek speaking Jews (Hellenists)³⁹, but were real Gentiles, Greeks (Hellenes), who had become ‘God-fearing’.

We do not know why they wanted to meet Jesus. Maybe they no longer believed in the wisdom of the Greeks and also could not find any real peace in the religion of the Jews. The answer of Jesus suggests that they wanted to talk to Jesus about *salvation*. We also don’t know why they did not approach Jesus themselves. Maybe they had heard that Jesus had said that he had come for the lost sheep of Israel⁴⁰. Nevertheless they tried to see Jesus, because they had also heard that Jesus said that he was gathering many other sheep from other sheep pens in the world, so that there would be one Shepherd with one flock⁴¹! These Greeks made their request via Philip and Andrew, the only two disciples of Jesus who had Greek names. Jesus gave his answer to his disciples, who in turn conveyed the answer to the Greeks. In his answer he spoke about his imminent death.

(V) 12:23-24. But Jesus speaks about his death.

12:23. Then Jesus answered (vipn) them saying, “The hour has come and is now here (vira) in which⁴² the Son of Man is to be glorified (vsap).

12:24. I tell (vipa) you the truth, unless a grain of wheat falls (vpaa) to the ground and dies (vsaa), it remains (vipa) alone by itself (i.e. only a single seed). But if it dies (vsaa), it continually (vipa) bears much fruit (i.e. many seeds).

A crowd of Jews were standing around Jesus when he made his reply to the question of the Greeks. Jesus said that the time had arrived that he would be ‘glorified’. By his glorification Jesus was referring to his death on the cross, his resurrection from the dead, his ascension into heaven and finally his enthronement in heaven, when he would sit at the right hand of God the Father. Jesus was speaking about his approaching death. The Greeks wanted to meet this famous living earthly Messiah, who had such a triumphant entry into Jerusalem. But Jesus made it clear to them that meeting the earthly Messiah would not help them at all! The earthly Messiah first had to die. Only after his resurrection, as the

³³ Romans 5:1-11

³⁴ Ephesians 2:11-22

³⁵ Matthew 23:15

³⁶ Acts 10:1,22,35; 13:16,26,43,50; 17:4

³⁷ 1 Kings 8:42; Isaiah 56:7-8; Mark 11:17

³⁸ Ephesians 2:14-15

³⁹ Acts 6:1

⁴⁰ Matthew 10:5; 15:24

⁴¹ John 10:16; Matthew 8:5-13

⁴² G: hina

living heavenly Messiah, would he be able to save them! But now, the time of his most bitter suffering and death had finally come. Jesus speaks of his death as ‘a grain of seed falling into the earth and dying’.

Every farmer knows that unless a grain of seed falls into the earth and dies, it cannot become a plant bearing many more seeds! On the one hand, Jesus says that it is absolutely necessary for him to die. If he does not die on the cross, no one can be saved! On the other hand, Jesus says that his death would produce the greatest harvest in the world. If he dies, then very many people would be saved (cf. 12:31-32).

Thus, when Jesus speaks of his death as a grain of seed falling into the earth and dying, he is teaching that *his substitutionary death* on the cross is absolutely necessary for the salvation of people and also that it would have the greatest effect on the history of this world! The substitutionary suffering and death of Jesus is also taught in Romans 3:23-25 and 5:12-21.

In these Greeks standing close to him, Jesus saw the beginning of the fulfilment of the prophecy in Isaiah 53:10, “The Lord makes his life a guilt offering; he will see his offspring” (literally: ‘seed’). These Greeks were the beginning of his great spiritual harvest on earth⁴³.

(VI) 12:25-26. Live the real life by dying to self.

12:25. He who loves (like)⁴⁴ (vppa) his life (soul) loses (vipa) it (i.e. not at the final judgement, but simultaneously now), and he who hates (vppa) his life in this world will certainly keep (vifa) it with a view to eternal life.

12:26. If anyone would serve (vspa) me, he must continually follow (vmpa) me; and where I am⁴⁵ (vipa), there also my servant shall *certainly* be (vifd). If anyone would serve (vspa) me, the Father will *certainly* honour (value highly)⁴⁶ (vifa) him.

a. The word ‘hating’ himself means to prefer his own life less.

The word ‘hating’ himself in the Greek language here means to love himself less, to prefer his own life less. With these words Jesus Christ teaches the principle of self-denial. When we look at John 12:23-26 together, we notice that the same principle of self-denial is true for Jesus and for Christians. In John 12:23-24, Jesus must die in order to save very many people. And in John 12:25-26, the Christian must be willing to die for the cause of Christ. Of course, a Christian cannot do that in his own strength. Nevertheless, the principle of self-denial is very important for Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ calls his disciples to put him first and above all relationships and all possessions⁴⁷. The same teaching of giving Jesus the first place in one’s life is taught in the other Gospels. Jesus is teaching the same teaching in Matthew 10:37-39, 16:24-26; Mark 8:34-38; and Luke 9:23; 14:26-33. In Matthew 10:37-39, Jesus says, “Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it”. In Acts 5:29 Peter says to the governing authorities, “We must obey God rather than men”. A Christian must give Jesus Christ the first place in his personal life and in his social life. He must give his highest allegiance to Jesus Christ and not to his parents, or teacher, or government. If there is a conflict between what Jesus Christ commands and what parents, teachers or political rulers (the government) demand, then a Christian must choose to obey Christ and gently resist the others.

A Christian must hate his life in this world, because it is the only way his life can be saved. A person who loves his own life is a person who gives his own life, his family and friends, the material possessions and the ambitions of this world a higher priority than Jesus Christ. Such a person will lose his life, that is, Jesus Christ will deny him and he will perish forever. But when a person follows Jesus Christ with perseverance wherever he leads until the end of his life, he will certainly experience eternal life! This means he must deny himself, take up his cross daily and follow Jesus.

b. The word ‘hating’ himself means that there is suffering in service.

The word ‘hating’ himself in the Greek language here teaches that there is suffering in service. In verse 26 Jesus means that if a Christian serves him, then let him follow Jesus Christ all the way, even though it is the way of self-denial and the cross. ‘To take his cross and follow Jesus’ in Matthew 10:39 means to be willing to suffer difficulties, rejection, persecution and sometimes death for the cause of Jesus Christ and his Kingdom in this world. But the Christian may keep in mind that the cross leads to the crown. Jesus says, “Whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it”. And he says, “My Father will honour the one who serves me”.

(VII) 12:27-30. God the Father glorifies God the Son.

12:27. Now my soul is troubled (virp), and what shall I say (vsaa)? Father, save (vmaa) me from this hour! But for this very reason I came (viaa) to this hour.

⁴³ cf. Revelation 5:9-10; 7:9

⁴⁴ G: phileó

⁴⁵ G: eimi egó

⁴⁶ G: timáó

⁴⁷ Luke 16:26,33

12:28. Father, glorify (vmaa) your name!” So there came (viaa) a voice out of heaven, “Both⁴⁸ I have glorified (viaa) it, and I will again glorify (vifa) it.”

12:29. However the multitude standing (vpra) (there), when they heard (vpaa) (it) were saying (viia), it had thundered (vnra). Others were saying (viia) “An angel had spoken (vira) to him.”

12:30. Jesus answered (viao) and said (viaa), “Not for my sake this voice occurred (vira), but for your sake.”

Jesus’ imminent death troubled his ‘soul’, that is, himself. The word ‘troubled’ refers to inner disturbance of rest (11:33; 13:21; 14:1,27). He exclaimed, “Father, save me from this hour!”

“Father save me from this hour!” (12:27). There should not be a question mark as in the Greek text and NIV translation (as if Jesus doubted or rebelled against God’s will), but an exclamation mark. He knew it is God’s will that he should die and in his human nature he requested to be released from this terrible judgement! This is in agreement with Matthew 26:39, Mark 14:36 and Luke 22:42 where Jesus said, “Everything is possible for you. Take this cup (of suffering) from me. Yet, not what I will, but what you will!” Jesus is fully aware of the horrible reality of his suffering!

Jesus came to this earth to do God’s will completely and thus to glorify God (4:34; 17:4)⁴⁹! Everything written in the Law of Moses, the Psalms and the Prophets had to go into fulfilment⁵⁰! Jesus asked God the Father to glorify his name, that is, that God the Father by means of revealing himself in God the Son would visibly manifest his divine attributes⁵¹, so that people would know him and worship him. ‘The name’ of God the Father stands for his revelation and here for his revelation in God the Son.

The voice of God the Father sounded from heaven and said that he had glorified it and would again glorify it. He had previously glorified it by speaking from heaven⁵² and by his mighty signs through Jesus Christ (11:4). He would once more glorify it (reveal his mercy and grace) by the death and exaltation of Christ (17:5). Some people (possibly sceptics who wanted to undervalue his words) said that it had thundered⁵³. Other people (who acknowledged that these words were supernatural) said that an angel had spoken. But Jesus said that this voice was for the benefit of the hearers. As in John 4:21 and 12:44 he intended to say that these words was not only for his own benefit (to encourage him), but also for the benefit of the other hearers (to glorify Christ in their midst). Thus everyone knew that the request of God the Son was heard by God the Father. Christ’s request was not to take away his suffering, but that God may be glorified in his suffering Christ!

(VIII) 12:31-33. Jesus limits Satan’s dominion by extending his own Kingdom.

12:31. Now is (vipa) the judgement of this (evil) world; now the prince of this (evil) world will be cast (vifp) out.

12:32. And I, when I am lifted up (vsap) from the earth, will draw (vifa) all (people) unto myself.”

12:33. This he was saying (viia) signifying (vppa) by what kind of death he was about (viia) to die (vnpa).

Jesus executes the judgement of Satan and the salvation of believers at the same time! He drives Satan out of (his position of power in) this world by drawing people in this world to himself. The lifting up of Jesus is a reference to his death and exaltation. Jesus speaks of driving Satan out of this world and of spreading his Kingdom on earth. The first event happens through the second event! Verse 32 explains verse 31.

a. The world.

The world (cf. 1:9-10) here does not refer to every individual that has ever lived, but refers to *the world as the realm of evil, openly hostile to God, Christ and Christians, the world that will be condemned* (15:18). It is the world of Jews that reject Christ; the world of religious leaders and teachers that condemn Jesus Christ without just cause; the world of Judas who betrayed him; the world of Pilate who judged him; and the world of his enemies who shouted, “Crucify him!” In short, the world is the whole society of unbelievers and evil people who are alienated from the God of the Bible and have Satan as their prince. This world had tried to cast Jesus Christ out of their religious and political world, but instead found that by their action they condemned themselves: they and their leader, Satan, will be driven out! In the final end of history the new earth will only belong to Jesus Christ and his people!

b. The prince of this world.

He is the devil or Satan. He exercises an evil power in all the countries of this world⁵⁴ and blinds unbelievers with his lies⁵⁵ so that they choose the way of Satan⁵⁶. Before the first coming of Jesus Christ, Satan had much power within this world and tried to keep God’s messengers away from his domain⁵⁷. But he never had absolute power⁵⁸! At his first

⁴⁸ G: kai kai

⁴⁹ Hebrews 5:7-8

⁵⁰ Luke 24:25-27,44-45

⁵¹ Hebrews 1:3

⁵² Mark 1:11; 9:7

⁵³ cf. Acts 9:7; 22:9

⁵⁴ cf. Luke 4:6

⁵⁵ 2 Corinthians 4:3-4

⁵⁶ Ephesians 2:2

⁵⁷ Daniel 10:13,20,21

⁵⁸ Psalm 145:13; 146:10; Isaiah 14:24-27

coming, Jesus Christ destroyed the work of the devil⁵⁹ and bound him through his driving out of demons⁶⁰, through his death⁶¹ and resurrection, and through his ascension and enthronement in heaven⁶². Thus at the beginning of the New Testament period Jesus Christ judged and condemned Satan⁶³ and Satan's power was curtailed, curbed, restrained, limited! Satan never had any power over Jesus Christ⁶⁴. Satan still has power over the world of unbelievers⁶⁵, but no power over the believers in this world⁶⁶! Although Christians are still engaged in a spiritual battle against Satan and his demons⁶⁷, Satan can no longer hinder the spread of the gospel to every nation in the world.

c. The word 'cast out'.

The word 'cast out' in verse 31 (cf. the same word in Revelation 12:9) is explained by the word 'to draw' in verse 32. Jesus says that through his death on the cross "the prince of the world will be cast out or driven out". The casting out of the devil out of his position as ruler in the world results in Jesus drawing millions and millions of people from every nation of the world to himself! By the death of Jesus on the cross and by his resurrection, ascension and enthronement in heaven, the devil is no longer able to keep the nations away from the truth of the gospel by his multiple lies⁶⁸. The devil has lost his power over the nations and he cannot keep them from hearing and receiving the gospel any more. From the beginning of the New Testament period, Jesus Christ draws people from every nation to himself through the proclamation of the gospel⁶⁹ and the irresistible working of the Holy Spirit (3:3-8). He brings them out of the dominion of darkness to the light of his Kingdom⁷⁰. Everywhere in all the nations where Christians come, Satan loses more and more his grip on these nations! The Greeks, who came to see Jesus, represented the beginning of an uncountable number of people from the Gentiles that would believe in Jesus Christ. And since his first coming until today, millions and millions of people have been drawn into his Kingdom.

d. The word 'all'.

The word 'all' does not necessarily mean that 'every human being that has ever lived' will be drawn to Jesus Christ. The context refers to all believers, to all Jews and non-Jews who believe in Jesus Christ without regard to their race or culture or previous sins (1:13; 8:31-59). Jesus is the Saviour of believing Jews, believing half-Jews (Samaritans) and believing non-Jews (Gentiles). Only in this sense is Jesus Christ 'the Saviour of the world' (4:42)⁷¹. He still has other sheep that come from other sheep pens (nations) and is gathering them into one flock with one Shepherd (10:16)! He also died for them (10:11,15) in order to bring the scattered children of God in the whole world together and make them one (11:51-52). Only in this sense is Jesus Christ 'the Lamb of God, that takes away the sin of the world' (1:29)⁷².

(IX) 12:34. Jesus is the Son of Man.

12:34. So the crowd answered (viao) him, "We have heard (viaa) from the law that the Messiah (Christ, God's Anointed) remains (vipa) forever, How then do you say (vipa) that the Son of Man must (vipa) be lifted up (vnap)? Who is (vipa) this 'Son of Man'?"

a. The Son of Man in the Old Testament.

The Jews possessed the law, which is here used in its widest sense as 'the Old Testament'. They were thinking of passages as Psalm 110:4, Isaiah 9:7, Ezekiel 37:25 and Daniel 7:14 and interpreted these passages as if the Messiah would never die.

b. The Son of Man in the New Testament.

The expression 'Son of Man' occurs eighty times in the Gospels, of which thirteen times in the Gospel of John. The expression is derived from Daniel 7:13-14⁷³. Jesus always utilizes this expression to refer to himself except in John 12:34. With it he expresses that he has a heavenly nature: he is the Mediator between heaven and earth (1:51). He comes from heaven (3:13). He will be lifted up on a cross (3:14). He possesses life just as God the Father possesses life (5:27). He gives eternal life (6:27). People must take him into themselves by faith (6:53-54, cf. 6:40). He speaks the words of God

⁵⁹ 1 John 3:8

⁶⁰ Matthew 12:28-30; Luke 10:18

⁶¹ Colossians 2:15; Hebrews 2:14

⁶² Revelation 12:5-9

⁶³ John 12:31; 16:11

⁶⁴ John 14:30

⁶⁵ 1 John 5:20

⁶⁶ 1 John 5:19; 1 Peter 5:8-9

⁶⁷ Ephesians 6:10-12

⁶⁸ cf. Revelation 12:6-12; 20:1-3

⁶⁹ James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:23

⁷⁰ Colossians 1:13; cf. Acts 26:18

⁷¹ Titus 2:11

⁷² cf. Romans 5:17-19

⁷³ cf. Matthew 26:64

(8:28). He demands people to believe that he is the Son of Man (9:35). He is glorified and God the Father is glorified in him (13:31). He will come again on the clouds⁷⁴. And the final judgement has been entrusted to him⁷⁵.

⁷⁴ Matthew 26:64

⁷⁵ Matthew 13:41; 25:31-46

(X) 12:35-36a. Jesus is the light. Walk in the light!

12:35. So Jesus told (viaa) them, “Yet a little while the light is (vipa) in (with) you. Walk (vmpa)(imperative) while you have (vipa) the light, so that the darkness does not overtake (vsaa) you.” He who is walking (vppa) in the darkness does not know (realise)(by reflection and intuition)⁷⁶ (vira) where he is going (vipa).

12:36a. While you have (vipa) the light, believe (vmpa)(imperative) in the light, in order that you may become (vsad) sons of light.”

Jesus did not answer their question whether he was the Son of Man. The Jews did not know the Old Testament very well and did not know that the Messiah would only be glorified by suffering, death, resurrection, ascension and enthronement⁷⁷.

Jesus responded to their idea that the (political) Messiah would remain forever in Israel by saying that the real Messiah as the Son of Man was the Light, but would be visibly with them only for a short while (from Tuesday afternoon to Thursday night). The Jews were speaking of political darkness (as long as they are dominated and oppressed by the Romans), but Jesus was speaking of spiritual darkness (of sin).

Through the proclamation of the Bible Jesus enlightens every man (1:9). All people have been given more or less knowledge of God and his will⁷⁸. No one would have a legitimate excuse⁷⁹. Some people, who join the community of believers, experience genuine truth and grace⁸⁰. To continue to walk in the light means to continue to walk according to the truth of the Bible, that is, to continue to walk very close with Jesus Christ. It means to have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, to love the truth (reality, honesty) and to love people (relationships)⁸¹.

Other people, who join the community of believers, have been enlightened⁸², also experience that truth and love, and some of them even prophesy (preach) and perform miracles in the name of Jesus⁸³.

But if these people get ensnared and controlled again by the filth of this world⁸⁴, they fall away from the faith⁸⁵. Although they have seen the Light, they deliberately keep on sinning. We must conclude that such people have never been born-again. Although they had received the light of the gospel, they had not turned to the light. They had continued to walk in darkness. Their conduct shows that they have not really accepted the message and have not really been liberated by Jesus from the slavery of their sins (8:31-32). They deliberately continue to sin, trample on Jesus Christ and scorn the Holy Spirit⁸⁶. Whoever does not follow or no longer follows Jesus Christ, walks in darkness. He does not realise where he is going!

Jesus Christ is the Light of the world (8:12). Jesus challenges people to believe in him and to continue to walk in his light!

(XI) 12:36b-43. Jesus' summary of Israel's response to him.

a. The end of the public ministry of Jesus (12:36b).

12:36b. These things Jesus spoke (viaa), and having left (vpaa) he hid himself (viap) from them.

Tuesday was a very busy day for Jesus: he instructed people in the temple court. On Tuesday afternoon he withdrew from the crowd and took his disciples on to the Mount of Olives (on their way to Bethany). There he spoke to them about the end of the temple and of Jerusalem and the end of the history of this world at his second coming⁸⁷. John 12:36b signals the end of the public ministry of Jesus. Jesus no longer addresses the crowd. John 12:36b-43 is a summary of the response of Israel to the Messiah.

b. The hardening of hearts during the Old Testament period.

God deliberately hardened the heart of Pharaoh. Before 1447 B.C. Pharaoh chose to harden his heart against God and his Word. God not only foresaw that Pharaoh would harden his heart, but actually planned and executed the hardening of Pharaoh's heart⁸⁸. This does not mean that God is unjust. Because all people share in the fall into sin⁸⁹, are born with a sinful nature⁹⁰ and actually sin⁹¹, no human being has a right to be saved! God remains perfectly just

⁷⁶ G: oida

⁷⁷ cf. Isaiah 52:13-15

⁷⁸ Romans 1:19-20; 2:14-15; Luke 12:47-48

⁷⁹ Romans 3:19-20

⁸⁰ John 1:17

⁸¹ 1 John 1:1-10

⁸² Hebrews 6:4a

⁸³ Matthew 7:22

⁸⁴ 2 Peter 2:20-21

⁸⁵ Hebrews 6:4-8

⁸⁶ Hebrews 10:26-31

⁸⁷ Matthew 23:37 to 25:46

⁸⁸ Exodus 7:3

⁸⁹ Romans 5:12,15-19

⁹⁰ Psalm 51:5; Job 14:4; Romans 7:14

⁹¹ Romans 3:23; 1 John 1:8,10

even if he did not save one person! Salvation happens only by God's unimaginable mercy and grace!⁹² God is sovereign and has the right and sovereign reasons to withhold his mercy and grace from some people.

Because God planned to save a great number of Israelites. Pharaoh did not act in ignorance. No one in history is completely ignorant and without guilt⁹³! Pharaoh remained completely responsible and guilty for hardening his heart⁹⁴. God's active part in Pharaoh's unbelief is only that God had decided from all eternity to withhold his mercy and grace with regard to Pharaoh's sin! God did this in order to accomplish his much greater plan with Israel in which Pharaoh played a part⁹⁵. Pharaoh's hardening served God's eternal plan to save a great number of the people of Israel.

God deliberately hardened the unbelievers in Israel⁹⁶. Between 740-680 B.C. the prophet Isaiah prophesied *the hardening of Israel* in Isaiah 6:9-10. *Jesus Christ refers to this hardening of Israel in Matthew 13:11-15. John refers to it in John 12:37-41 and Paul refers to it in Acts 28:25-27 and in Romans 11:8-10. The writer of the letter to the Hebrews refers to it in Hebrews 3:12 - 4:2; 6:4-6 and 10:26-29.*

Because God planned to save a great number of Gentiles. The rejection of Jesus Christ (the Messiah) by Israel has not frustrated God's eternal plan! Israel's responsibility and guilt remains completely their own, but *the hardening of Israel* served God's eternal plan to save, beside some Jews, an uncountable number of Gentiles (non-Jews)⁹⁷.

The hardening of Israel has always been a partial hardening⁹⁸. The hardening of Israel led in the beginning of the New Testament period to the crucifixion and consequent resurrection of Jesus Christ⁹⁹! Isaiah already prophesied this when he said that Jesus would only be exalted by way of his humiliation¹⁰⁰. Through his suffering as an atonement sacrifice he would justify many (not all) people on earth¹⁰¹. The apostle Peter said the same when he proclaimed that the Jews and Gentiles had crucified Jesus Christ, but that God used these events (his death and resurrection) to save people¹⁰². The apostle Paul said the same when he proclaimed that the Jews and Gentiles had crucified Jesus Christ, but that God had used these events to save people¹⁰³.

Only some believe and accept God's plan. Only some people, like the prophet Isaiah, who by God's grace were able to see the end (Christ's exaltation) from the beginning (Christ's humiliation), were able to accept God's eternal plan without rebelling against it.

John quotes Isaiah 53:1 from the Greek translation of the Old Testament. Isaiah wondered who in Israel believed his prophetic words and who in Israel understood God's mighty acts. In order to be justified by God it is absolutely necessary that one must believe, understand and accept the words of God. Both Isaiah and Jesus found much unbelief in Israel.

The New Testament believes that the prophet Isaiah and not some unknown person was the author of the book of Isaiah. John does not speak of 'the book of Isaiah', but of 'the prophet Isaiah' (740-680 B.C.).

c. The hardening of hearts during the New Testament period (12:37-40).

12:37. And though Jesus had performed (vpra) so many of his miraculous signs in their presence¹⁰⁴, they would still not believe (viia) in him,

12:38. in order that the word spoken (viaa) by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled (vsap) "Lord, who has believed (viaa) our message (report)(the words spoken by the prophets)? And the arm of the Lord (i.e. the mighty deeds of the Lord) to whom was it revealed (viap)?"

12:39. For this reason they could (viin) not believe (vnpa), for again Isaiah said (viaa):

12:40. "He has blinded (vira) their eyes and hardened (viaa) their heart, with the purpose that¹⁰⁵ they will not see (vsaa) with their eyes and perceive (vsaa) with their heart, and should turn (vsap) and I should heal (vifd) them."

In Isaiah 1:2-10 and 6:9-10 the Lord speaks of Israel as "a sinful nation, a people loaded with guilt, a brood of evildoers, children given to corruption, that have forsaken the LORD and spurned the Holy One of Israel". "Unless the LORD Almighty had left Israel some survivors (a remnant), Israel would have become like Sodom and Gomorrah." The LORD had performed many signs in Israel's midst and had sent prophet after prophet to Israel, but many had hardened their heart against them. Therefore the LORD hardened their heart so that they would not and could not believe anymore!

⁹² Ephesians 2:8

⁹³ Romans 1:18-32; 2:11-15; 3:9-23

⁹⁴ Exodus 8:32; 9:12

⁹⁵ Romans 9:16-18; 8:28-30; Ephesians 1:4-5

⁹⁶ Romans 11:4-10; Hebrews 3:15 - 4:2

⁹⁷ Acts 13:46-48; Romans 11:11-32

⁹⁸ Romans 11:4-7,25

⁹⁹ 1 Corinthians 2:6-9

¹⁰⁰ Isaiah 52:13-15

¹⁰¹ Isaiah 53:5-12; cf. Mark 10:45

¹⁰² Acts 2:22-24,38-39; 3:13-15,18-19

¹⁰³ Acts 13:27-39

¹⁰⁴ G: emprosthen

¹⁰⁵ G: hina

In the New Testament Jesus had performed many miraculous signs before their eyes (2:11,23; 3:2; 4:48,54; 6:2,14,26; 7:31; 9:16; 10:41; 11:47; 12:18; 20:30; 21:25) and had spoken his Word to them. Nevertheless, many Jews *persisted* not to believe in him. With the exception of John 12:11 (the raising of Lazarus) the response of Israel to Jesus Christ was mainly unbelief. Israel hardened itself more and more against Jesus Christ, his words and his miraculous signs.

God's perfectly holy and righteous demand (law). The literal translation (12:40) is, "with the purpose that¹⁰⁶ the word of the prophet Isaiah would go into fulfilment." There have been many attempts of commentators to argue the word 'with the purpose that' away in order to bring its sense to conform to their particular theological view of Israel or the so-called free will of man, but without success. *God's moral order: God's absolute holiness and righteousness demands:*

- that all people (non-Jews AND Jews) must also be absolutely holy and righteous and
- that all lack thereof must be punished. Those who harden themselves against God and his Word will finally be irrevocably hardened¹⁰⁷! They will become what they have chosen to be! They will reap what they have sowed¹⁰⁸.

The Jews are morally responsible for their own lack of response or negative response towards Jesus Christ (cf. 1:11-13).

God's perfectly holy and righteous punishment. Jesus continued to apply Isaiah 6:9-10 by changing the imperative mood in the book of Isaiah to the indicative mood in the Gospel of John, because this prophecy had reached its fulfilment during the first coming of Jesus (12:39-40). Isaiah had to go and blind the eyes of the Jews. Now at the first coming of Jesus "God had blinded their eyes *in order that*¹⁰⁹ they could not see and had hardened their hearts *in order that* they could not perceive (understand) and turn and be healed." John omits Isaiah's words: "Stop their ears", because he was speaking about the signs of which the Jews failed to see the meaning.

Every attempt to argue away God's deliberate intension to harden the hearts of certain people is reprehensible.

John points to the terrible consequences of hardening one's heart against Jesus Christ and his Word. God shows no delight when unbelievers perish. He says: "I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from our evil ways! Why will you die, O house of Israel?"¹¹⁰ On the contrary he proclaims the good news of salvation everywhere and warns people for the consequences of their unbelief. He spurs people on to walk in the light (12:35-36)!

But when people deliberately harden their hearts after many proclamations and warnings, after many promises and threats, then God hardens their hearts so that they can no longer repent! Then God allows people to become what they themselves have continually chosen to be! There comes a time when God no longer contends with man¹¹¹.

d. The hardening of hearts and the regeneration of hearts reveal God's glory (12:41).

12:41. These things Isaiah said (viaa) because he (Isaiah) saw (viaa) his (Jesus') glory and spoke (viaa) concerning him.

People who continue to condemn God for being unjust¹¹² and cruel, do not want to take God's warning to heart, because they either do not see or do not want to see the glory of God.

John says that Isaiah saw in a vision the glory (majesty, holiness, righteousness, mercy and love) of God on the throne in heaven¹¹³. The Godhead is Spirit and thus invisible (4:24)¹¹⁴, but nevertheless reveals himself visibly in Jesus Christ (1:1,14,18; 14:9; 17:6)¹¹⁵. *Therefore, the person Isaiah saw sitting on the throne is the visible Lord Jesus Christ!* Isaiah had not criticised God's words of judgement against Israel in Isaiah 6:9-10, but had accepted them, recorded them and proclaimed them faithfully. Isaiah also saw *the day of Jesus Christ* when he saw the glory of Jesus Christ by faith when he proclaimed the future suffering of Jesus Christ¹¹⁶ and the future glory of Jesus Christ^{117 118}.

Christians must realise that the God who reveals himself in the Bible is perfectly holy and righteous. He demands that people must also be completely holy and righteous before they can approach him and fellowship with him. They must realise that God must punish all unholiness and unrighteousness, or otherwise God is no longer holy or righteous! And because all people are born in sin¹¹⁹ and share the fall into sin together with their representative, Adam¹²⁰, all people in their natural state are lost and deserve to be doomed. God would remain perfectly holy and righteous even if he did not save one single person!

¹⁰⁶ G: hina

¹⁰⁷ Romans 1:18-32

¹⁰⁸ Galatians 6:7-8

¹⁰⁹ G: hina

¹¹⁰ Ezekiel 33:11

¹¹¹ Genesis 6:3

¹¹² cf. Romans 9:19-24

¹¹³ Isaiah 6:1-8, which precedes Isaiah 6:9-10

¹¹⁴ 1 Timothy 6:16

¹¹⁵ Matthew 1:23; 28:20; Colossians 1:15

¹¹⁶ Isaiah 53:1-10a

¹¹⁷ Isaiah 6:1-5; 9:6-7; 52:13-15; 53:10b-12

¹¹⁸ cf. Abraham in John 8:56

¹¹⁹ Job 14:4; 15:14; Psalm 51:5

¹²⁰ Romans 5:12

However, God is also perfectly merciful and love. He did what no man could imagine. He took on the human nature in Jesus Christ, entered his own creation and the history of man, and died *in the place of his sheep* – the people who accept him, believe in him and continue to follow him (10:11). He died as a ransom for *many*¹²¹ and as an atonement for the sins of *believers*¹²². This is perfect love and grace¹²³!

Thus, God's judgement in hardening hearts and God's salvation in regenerating hearts reveal God's glorious divine attributes: his holiness and righteousness on the one hand and his love, mercy and grace on the other hand.

e. Many leaders in Israel had no genuine and persevering faith in Jesus Christ (12:42-43).

12:42. Also (likewise)¹²⁴, nevertheless¹²⁵, even of the rulers (i.e. the Jewish religious leaders) many believed (viaa) in him, but because of the Pharisees they were not confessing (viia) (it), in order that they might not become (vsad) people expelled (excommunicated) from the synagogue.

12:43. for they loved (viaa) the glory of men more¹²⁶ than¹²⁷ the glory of God.

Many leaders in Israel did believe in Jesus Christ. When the word 'to believe' uses the present continuous tense (3:16,18,36; 6:35,40,47; 7:38; 11:25-26; 12:44,46; 14:12; 17:20) or the imperfect tense (12:11), then it always refers to a genuine and persevering faith that saves people. But when the word 'to believe' uses the aorist tense (2:23; 7:31; 8:30, cf. 8:33,37; 12:42), then it always refers to faith that is not genuine and after some time stops. This happens when people believe in the miracles of Jesus Christ, but not in the Jesus Christ and his sacrifice of atonement for their sins (the gospel). Then it points to the fact that their hearts have not been born again and that they consequently have never been saved¹²⁸. Many Jews in Israel had this *temporary faith* in Jesus Christ. Their faith had not touched and transformed their hearts. They did not confess Jesus Christ, because they often feared the threats of the Pharisees (7:13; 9:22) who saw Jesus Christ as the greatest threat for their position of power in the nation. They feared that they would be expelled from the synagogue, which meant that they would also be banished from the political, judicial, social and economic life of the Jewish nation. A characteristic of a genuine believer is that he openly confesses Jesus Christ¹²⁹, lives for Christ (12:24-26) and bears fruit for Christ (15:5-6). This the Jewish leaders did not do.

On the contrary it was more important for them what other Jews thought about them (5:44)! They loved the praise from men more than the praise from God (12:43). It is possible that some of them, like Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea (3:1; 19:38-42)¹³⁰ later told this to John.

How the Bible views faith. Philippians 1:29 teaches, "It has been granted to you ... to believe on Christ". And Acts 13:48 records, "All who were appointed for eternal life believed". The consistent teaching in the Bible is that faith is a *gift* of God. Faith is not a work of man. By grace God gives faith and then man has the responsibility to exercise the faith that God gives to him. John 12:42-43 teaches that genuine faith is not simply an intellectual assent, but a commitment to not only believe with the heart, but also to confess that faith with the lips.

How the Bible views unbelief. In John 12:37-40 John writes, "Even after Jesus had done all these miraculous signs in their presence, they kept on not believing in Jesus. Because they would not believe in him ... they could not believe in him! Isaiah says 'God has blinded their eyes and deadened their hearts, so they can neither see with their eyes, nor understand with their hearts, nor turn - and I would heal them'."

In the same way, the Pharisees and many other Jews had seen the miracles of Jesus Christ and had heard his many teachings and yet they too had refused to believe in Jesus Christ. Therefore, they are judged in the same way¹³¹.

Likewise, every person today has a responsibility to respond to the words of God in the Bible. He has a responsibility to respond to the teachings and works of Jesus Christ. If a person's attitude is like that of the Pharisees and he constantly criticises Christ, then his heart will also be hardened and he will not be able to enter into God's Kingdom. However, every person, who sincerely responds to God's word, need not have any fear. Every good and clean heart will respond to God's word, will grow and will bear fruit!

(XII) 12:44-50. Jesus repeats important sayings.

Jesus repeated in private to his disciples some of his most important statements which he had proclaimed in public before.

a. Light and darkness (12:44-46).

¹²¹ Mark 10:45

¹²² Romans 3:24-26

¹²³ Romans 3:24; 5:2,15,17; Ephesians 2:8-9; 2 Timothy 1:9-10

¹²⁴ G: homós

¹²⁵ G: mentoi

¹²⁶ G: mallon

¹²⁷ G: éper

¹²⁸ Matthew 7:21-23

¹²⁹ Matthew 10:32-33

¹³⁰ Mark 15:43-36; cf. Daniel 11:34

¹³¹ Matthew 13:11-17

12:44. And Jesus cried out (viaa) and said (viaa), “He who believes (vpaa) in me does not believe (vipa) in me but in him who sent (vpaa) me.

12:45. He who observes¹³² (vpaa) me, observes (vipa) him who sent (vpaa) me.

12:46. I have come (vira) as a light into the world, in order that everyone who believes (vpaa) in me may not remain (vsaa) in darkness.

Jesus made similar seemingly contradictory statements (4:21; 12:30) in which a missing word must be added in thought. Jesus intends to say, “Whoever believes in me, does not believe in me *exclusively*, but also in the one who sent me.” Compare John 7:16, 8:19,42, 10:30 en 13:20.

The word ‘to observe’ means to gaze attentively at Jesus. Then he will discover how the invisible God reveals himself in the visible Jesus Christ¹³³. Note John 8:19, 10:38 en 14:9.

The promise that the Light will lead people out of their darkness is for everyone who has a genuine and continuous faith in Jesus (3:16; 8:12). Other people, who were enlightened by Jesus (1:9) but did not accept him with true faith (1:11), come more and more in the darkness. Note John 1:4-5; 9:5 and 12:35-36.

b. Salvation and judgement (12:47-48).

12:47. And if anyone hears (vsaa) my words, but does not keep (vsaa) them, I do not judge (vipa) him, for I did not come (viaa) in order to judge (vsaa) the world, but in order to save (vsaa) the world.

12:48. He who rejects (vpaa) me and does not receive (vpaa) my word, has (vipa) one who judges (vpaa) him: the word which I have spoken (viaa) , that will judge (vifa) him in the last day.

The most important goal of Jesus Christ at his first coming was not to judge the world, but to save it (12:47-48; cf. 3:17; 8:15-16). But whoever rejects his words¹³⁴ stands condemned already (3:18). The words such a person rejected will judge him in the final judgement (5:45-47; 8:37; in contrast: 8:51; 14:23).

c. The Son speaks as the Father instructed him (12:49-50).

12:49. For I have not spoken (speak, proclaim)¹³⁵ (viaa) of my own accord, but the Father who sent (vpaa) me, he himself has given (vira) me a commandment (instruction) what I should say (utter in words, tell)¹³⁶ (vsaa) and what (not: how) I should speak (vsaa).

12:50. I know (by relationship and intuition)¹³⁷ (vira) that his commandment (instruction) is (vipa) eternal life. Therefore the things I speak (vipa), even as the Father has told (vira) me, so I speak (vipa).

The ‘commandment’ is a rule for the inward attitude and outward behaviour of a person (cf. 13:34). The words ‘say’ and ‘speak’ are synonyms and emphasize that everything Jesus said (taught) was based on what God instructed him to say. Note John 3:11, 7:16, 8:26,28,38 en 14:10. The ‘commandment’ of God the Father to Jesus was that he should give eternal life to believers (3:16; 6:63)¹³⁸. In the Bible there is no contradiction between the God who reveals himself in the Old Testament and the God who reveals himself in the New Testament. What he says and does in the Old Testament, he also says and does in the New Testament. God the Son says only what God the Father instructs him to say. God speaks his final word in Jesus Christ¹³⁹!

APPLICATIONS

- 12:3. Sometimes make a great expense that would honour Jesus Christ.
- 12:6. Watch out that when you are responsible for the finances that you do not become stingy or dishonest like Judas.
- 12:10. If the enemies of Jesus Christ plotted to kill him, they will also plot to kill Christians. Be prepared.
- 12:16. Do not look at Jesus Christ in the same way as the religious leaders of the Jews did. They not only did not know their own religious Scriptures¹⁴⁰, but also replaced the Scriptures with their own traditions concerning the Messiah.
- 12:17,19. Generally, not the religious leaders, but the ordinary people will spread the word about Jesus Christ to other people. Let the ordinary people spread the gospel message.
- 12:20-21. If the religious leaders will not receive Jesus Christ, the ordinary people will! Proclaim the gospel message to the ordinary people.
- 12:24-25. Self-denial and suffering for Christ’s sake are two of the most important Christian virtues.

¹³² G: theóreo

¹³³ Colossians 1:15; Hebrews 1:3

¹³⁴ Matthew 7:26-27; James 2:14-26

¹³⁵ G: laleó

¹³⁶ G: legó, eipon

¹³⁷ G: oida

¹³⁸ 1 John 2:25

¹³⁹ Hebrews 1:3. God reveals his words through Jesus Christ, God’s human nature.

¹⁴⁰ cf. Matthew 22:29; John 5:39

- 12:31-32. Proclaim the gospel message to people in the whole world, because Jesus Christ is drawing them to himself.
12:42-43. People with genuine faith in Jesus Christ will confess Jesus Christ with their mouth even when they are persecuted.
12:48. The message of the gospel will either justify you now or judge you in the last day.

QUESTIONS

- 12:1-8. Why did Mary anoint Jesus?
12:9-11. Why did so many Jews come from Jerusalem to Bethany?
12:12-19. How can the four accounts about the triumphal entry of Jesus be harmonised?
12:12-19. What does the triumphal entry into Jerusalem show about Jesus Christ?
12:20-22. Why were there Greeks among those who came to worship in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast?
12:23-24. What does Jesus mean when he says that unless a kernel of wheat dies, it remains only a single seed?
12:25-26. Why should a Christian hate his life in this world?
12:27-30. What does it mean to glorify God's name?
12:31-33. In what practical way is Satan driven out of this world?
12:34. What does Jesus mean when he calls himself the Son of Man?
12:35-36a. What does it mean to continue to walk in the light?
12:36b-43. What does the Bible teach about unbelief and hardening hearts?
12:42-43. How does the Bible view faith and unbelief?