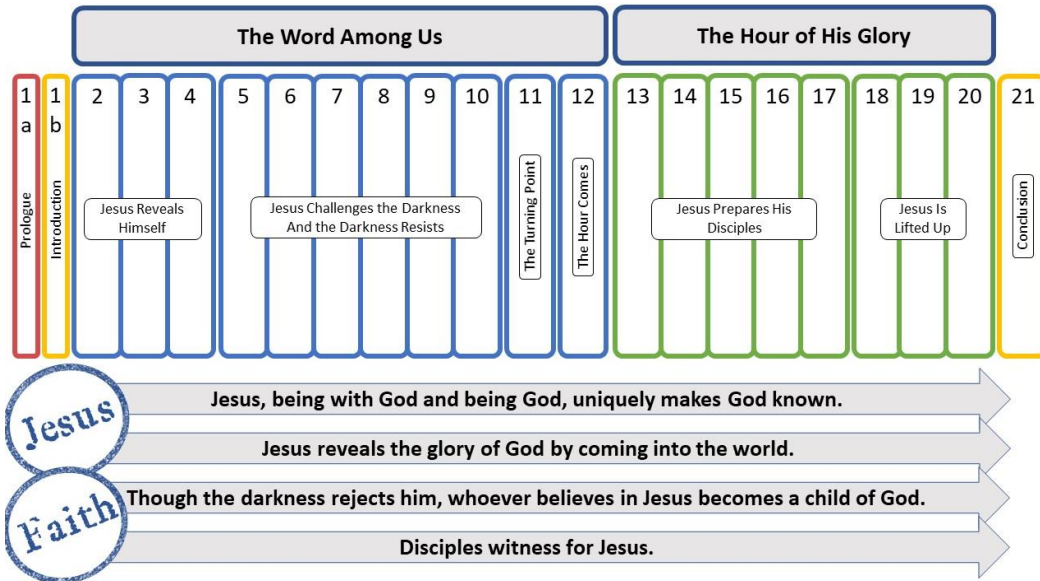


Lesson 20: John 12 The Hour of Glory has Come

Introduction



We could approach John much more slowly than I have done, taking smaller passages for each lesson. Chapter 12 breaks down into five scenes or sections. We could do a lesson on each, giving more attention to detail and application. That's a good approach. I have taken a different approach to John's Gospel. I've covered larger sections in each lesson to give us more context each time.

My purpose is for us to gain a strong sense of John's flow of thought, to understand his structure and to keep in mind the major themes. It does mean that we have moved over a good bit of detail and insight. There is much still in John to notice and reflect on in your own personal study of the text the next time you come back to it.

John 12 is an important transitional chapter in the Gospel. John is typically divided into two major parts. Nobody agrees on how to title these parts. I called the first part *The Word Among Us*. That part covers chapters 2 to 12. The second I titled *The Hour of His Glory*. That part covers chapters 13-20. Scholars disagree about whether chapter 12 belongs at the end of the first part or is really the beginning of the second part. And it is worth considering why.

We could understand John 12 to end the first part because of different factors that connect us back to the first half of the Gospel. Chapter 2 began with Jesus telling his mother, "My hour has not yet come (2:4)." In 12:23 Jesus announces, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified." That's a connection. These two statements create bookends for the larger part. In chapter 3 we hear for the first time that the Son of Man must be lifted up. We hear that again in chapter 12 for the third and last time. That's another connection. Chapter 12 also includes the symbolism of walking in the light that has been so important as a theme in John, starting in the prologue, and recurring in chapters 3 and 8 and 9 and 11. There will be no reference to Jesus as the light or to walking in the light after chapter 12. So, that is going to end here. Finally, this is the end of Jesus' public ministry. He is going to have comments to one of those crowds that consistently gathered around him, but after this he is not going to speak in public in that way again.

Even with all this connection to what has come before in the Gospel, we still also see connections pointing ahead to part II. The biggest is this idea that Jesus hour has come. He does not say his "hour will come", like he did in chapter 2. Or "my time is not yet", like he said in chapter 8. No in chapter 12 he says, "The hour has come." And it is the hour of the Son's glorification. That's what chapters 13-20 are all about, "the hour of glory." So, this could easily be the beginning of that part.

But whether the end of the first part or the beginning of the second part, chapter 12 is definitely a transition. It is transitioning us from the public ministry of Jesus where he revealed himself through

his teaching and through the seven signs. Now, we are being bridged over to the hour of his glory where he will reveal himself in an even greater final sign which also provides for us our salvation.

The five sections of chapter 12 all point us to the glory of Jesus. These are the sections.

- 1) Mary anoints Jesus (12:1-11).
- 2) The multitude glorify Jesus (12:12-19).
- 3) Greeks seek Jesus (12:20-36).
- 4) Isaiah explains the Jewish response to Jesus (12:37-43).
- 5) Jesus testifies to himself (12:44-50)

1. Mary anoints Jesus. (12:1-11)

We begin with the beautiful act of devotion of Mary anointing Jesus. This is verses 1-11.

¹ Jesus, therefore, six days before the Passover, came to Bethany where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. ² So they made Him a supper there, and Martha was serving; but Lazarus was one of those reclining *at the table* with Him. ³ Mary then took a pound of very costly perfume of pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. ⁴ But Judas Iscariot, one of His disciples, who was intending to betray Him, said, ⁵ "Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and given to poor *people*?" ⁶ Now he said this, not because he was concerned about the poor, but because he was a thief, and as he had the money box, he used to pilfer what was put into it. ⁷ Therefore Jesus said, "Let her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of My burial. ⁸ "For you always have the poor with you, but you do not always have Me." ⁹ The large crowd of the Jews then learned that He was there; and they came, not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might also see Lazarus, whom He raised from the dead. ¹⁰ But the chief priests planned to put Lazarus to death also; ¹¹ because on account of him many of the Jews were going away and were believing in Jesus.

Mary sees Jesus. Mary loves Jesus. The resurrection of her brother Lazarus could only increase her awe of Jesus. She pours out her adoration in an act of humble, authentic, extravagant devotion.

Looking through the other Gospels, this seems to be the second time that Jesus is anointed in Bethany, possibly both at the house of Simon the Leper. We are not told that the dinner here is actually in the house of Mary, Martha and Lazarus even though Martha as serving. It could be more a community affair in the home of Simon. Just as I believe that the two clearings of the temple that get reported in different Gospels, one at the beginning and the other at the end, just as I believe that those are actually two different events, I also believe the stories of an anointing by a woman were really two different events. The woman in Luke 7 is not named. She is identified as a sinner who is forgiven. And that is the focus of that story, the forgiveness and the gratitude that comes from experiencing that forgiveness. That account occurred before the feeding of the five thousand, a year before this story. Here, just like in Mark 14, the woman is named as Mary and the account occurs just before the last supper. And the focus is not on forgiveness but on devotion.

In Mark 14 Mary pours the perfume on Jesus' head. It does not say here in John that she does not pour the ointment on Jesus' head. John simply does not mention the head. He is focused on the feet. And in doing so, John brings up a past image and a future image. At the beginning of this Gospel, John the Baptist described Jesus as, "He who comes after me, the thong of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie (1:27)." But then in chapter 13 it is going to be Jesus who washes the feet of his disciples. And in both instances, the reference to feet conveys a humbling, a humbling of John the Baptist in his view of himself in relationship to Jesus. He is not worthy to touch his dirty feet. And a humbling of Jesus the master who kneels down and serves his disciples. So, also here with Mary, pouring perfume on his feet and wiping his feet with her hair. She shows this deep sense of awe in her relationship with Jesus. She gets that he is so great and glorious that it is an honor for her to wipe his feet with her hair. It is an act of humility.

Her choice of ointment communicates extravagance. Mary pours out 11 ounces or about 300 grams of pure nard, a very expensive perfume thought to come from India. Judas evaluates it at 300 denarii which would amount to a year's wages for a laborer. We do not know whether the family of Mary, Martha and Lazarus was that wealthy or whether this perfume was like a family heirloom that had been passed down, but it is worth an enormous amount.

Judas remarks with false piety that the sum would have better served the poor. And then Jesus makes that interesting comment, "the poor you will always have with you." And that might strike you a little funny. That is kind of a strange thing for Jesus to say. It is right to question ourselves as believers in the use of our wealth and in our contribution to care for the poor. Are we really caring for the poor? At the same time, it is also right to praise God with our whole heart and to do things for God, to spend resources in devotion of God. Judas is making a false distinction as though the two must be mutually exclusive. Jesus receives the humble, extravagant, loving devotion of Mary with approval. She has done well. When we see the glory of God and humble ourselves in worship and make sacrifice from the heart for him, we do a good thing. And you can be sure that it was not the amount of the perfume that moved Jesus but the heart of Mary. And the heart was shown in the extent of her sacrifice. And he receives her devotion because he is glorious. And it is right to give him glory.

Jesus further points out that whether Mary knew it or not, her actions symbolize a loving preparation of his body for death. In really only a few days, two men are going to take Jesus' body down from a cross and bind it up along with spices, according to the Jewish custom of burial. Jesus recognizes Mary's action as foreshadowing the hour of his glory.

The last verses of this section add to our understanding of the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. The other gospels do not tell us about the resurrection of Lazarus, so we did not know that was part of the excitement that was going on. We see here that the wonder surrounding this miraculous sign adds to the excitement of his arrival into Jerusalem at this time of Passover.

2. The multitude glorifies Jesus. (12:12-19)

In our second section, the multitude glorifies Jesus. These are verses 12-19.

¹² On the next day the large crowd who had come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, ¹³ took the branches of the palm trees and went out to meet Him, and *began* to shout, "Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel." ¹⁴ Jesus, finding a young donkey, sat on it; as it is written, ¹⁵ "Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, your King is coming, seated on a donkey's colt." ¹⁶ These things His disciples did not understand at the first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things were written of Him, and that they had done these things to Him. ¹⁷ So the people, who were with Him when He called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead, continued to testify *about Him*. ¹⁸ For this reason also the people went and met Him, because they heard that He had performed this sign. ¹⁹ So the Pharisees said to one another, "You see that you are not doing any good; look, the world has gone after Him."

The crowd cries "Hosanna!", which means "Save us!" The cry fits exactly with the hour of glory. Jesus has come to save through death on a cross. But we should not read back our later understanding of Jesus on to this crowd. How do they think Jesus is going to save them? What do they want Jesus to save them from? They acknowledge his coming in the name of the Lord, and they call him King of Israel, that is Christ. They see Jesus as the Messiah. They want salvation from Rome. Though I think it is even more than that. I think they have the vision of the prophets in mind that the Messiah is going to free them from outside rule and usher in a new era of peace and security and prosperity and wipe away pain and crying. As in the Isaiah 2 vision there will be an end to war, and Gentiles will stream into Jerusalem to learn the word of God. So, they have this great positive vision of this earthly kingdom and a strong leadership.

They desire deliverance from foreign rule. They do not understand that their celebration foreshadows an even greater, a much greater deliverance, a greater salvation that has to come through the death of the Messiah. In their minds, they lift Jesus up in glory with praise, “King of Israel.” But in reality, they help prepare him for his lifting up on the cross.

Jesus chooses to fulfill the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9 by riding into Jerusalem on a donkey. It was said that the king would come on a donkey. Some prophecies you cannot choose yourself to fulfill, such as being born of the line of David in Bethlehem, or growing up in Galilee, or being betrayed for thirty pieces of silver. You can’t choose to fulfill those prophecies. But this is not one of those. Jesus chose to fulfill this prophecy, and in doing so, shows that he recognizes himself to be the Messiah. Jesus rightly receives the shouts of acclamation even though he knows there is a twist to the story that this crowd does not understand.

The final verses of the section verify that the resurrection of Lazarus has added considerably to the enthusiasm of the crowd. The people who witnessed that miracle are giving testimony to what they saw. Verse 18 tells us, “For this reason also the people went and met Him, because they heard that He had performed this sign.”

3. Greeks seek Jesus. (12:20-36)

Our third section foreshadows the coming reign of the Messiah as applying to the peoples of the earth. This is 12:20-36.

²⁰ Now there were some Greeks among those who were going up to worship at the feast; ²¹ these then came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and *began* to ask him, saying, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.” ²² Philip came and told Andrew; Andrew and Philip came and told Jesus. ²³ And Jesus answered them, saying, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. ²⁴ “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. ²⁵ He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal. ²⁶ If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him. ²⁷ Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, ‘Father, save Me from this hour’? But for this purpose I came to this hour. ²⁸ Father, glorify Your name.” Then a voice came out of heaven: “I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.”

²⁹ So the crowd *of people* who stood by and heard it were saying that it had thundered; others were saying, “An angel has spoken to Him.” ³⁰ Jesus answered and said, “This voice has not come for My sake, but for your sakes. ³¹ Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. ³² And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself.” ³³ But He was saying this to indicate the kind of death by which He was to die. ³⁴ The crowd then answered Him, “We have heard out of the Law that the Christ is to remain forever; and how can You say, ‘The Son of Man must be lifted up’? Who is this Son of Man?” ³⁵ So Jesus said to them, “For a little while longer the Light is among you. Walk while you have the Light, so that darkness will not overtake you; he who walks in the darkness does not know where he goes. ³⁶ “While you have the Light, believe in the Light, so that you may become sons of Light.” These things Jesus spoke, and He went away and hid Himself from them.

The two Greeks who come to see Jesus might be from Greece, but the term applies to any of the Gentiles living in the Greek-speaking world controlled by Rome. The important fact is that they are not Jews. We met Andrew and Philip in the introduction of chapter 1, bringing others to Jesus. Now they want to bring the two Greeks to Jesus, but Jesus holds them off, he gives them an answer that doesn’t seem like an answer, and that’s not unusual with Jesus, it seems like he changes the subject. But he does not really. We’re going to come back around to the Greeks by the end of the passage.

In response to Andrew and Philip’s request, Jesus declares, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.” That would seem apparent by the great reception he’s just received entering

Jerusalem. The crowd is glorifying Jesus. It's his hour. But that is not what Jesus means. After announcing his hour has come, Jesus speaks of the necessity of a grain of wheat to fall to the earth and die in order to produce fruit. He is using that metaphor for himself. His purpose requires him to die if others are to be gathered in. He knows he must die to bring in his sheep. The hour of his glory is the cross, his death.

The next verse shifts quickly from Jesus' death to the followers of Jesus who must also give up life to gain it. Jesus knows the hour of his glory is one of darkness and calls those who believe in him to follow him even into the darkness.

Jesus then acknowledges his own troubled soul. He is not distracted by the acclamation of the crowds; he's not jubilant. He knows that God brought him to this Passover to fulfill the symbolism of the Passover Lamb. He will not ask the Father to save him out of it. As he declares, "For this purpose I came to this hour." He came into the world to save the world by giving up his life for all people. This has been the plan all along. This is the timing of God.

Jesus declares that this is the hour of his glorification, but he also declares that he is not seeking his own glory. And Jesus has been firm in this throughout, that his desire is the glory of God; he has submitted himself to the will of God. His own glory is wrapped up in the Father's glory. Jesus asks, "'Father, glorify Your name.' And a voice came out of heaven: 'I have both glorified it, and will glorify it.'" The Father has continually glorified himself by revealing his glory through Jesus; the teaching and the miracles, the power of Jesus. And he's going to continue that to the end, through the cross, he's going to continue to bring himself glory even through the willing sacrifice of the Son.

It will first appear that the ruler of the world has won; Satan, the thief who comes to kill and steal and destroy. But what looks to him like victory will instead be his downfall. The cross declares judgement on the world and conquers the evil one. He will be cast out. Jesus does not explain the how or when of this. But we get this image of a mighty ruler removed from his throne and cast out of the kingdom.

Following the image of a ruler cast down, Jesus declares the contrast with himself, "And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself." Jesus will be lifted up to take the place of the vanquished ruler. It's the language of the reigning king. And when he does, he will draw all men to himself. He will fulfill the Messianic vision of nations streaming into Zion. But since his throne will be established for now in heaven, the men and women drawn to him will not gather in a fixed place like Jerusalem. But drawn to Jesus Christ, they will bow down among all the peoples of the earth to lift him up in praise and glory.

But there's an irony here. Yes, Jesus ought to be immediately lifted up in glory. But the need for the cross turns everything upside down. It appears to be the failure of Jesus and the victory of Satan, but instead becomes the ruin of Satan and the glory of Jesus. It will be a towering sign established on earth for all peoples to see: the cross declares the love and justice of God and is an invitation to come and believe and enter into the kingdom of our Lord.

And so, Jesus has come back around to the Greeks. It is not their time yet to meet the Lord Jesus. They cannot see him, not yet. First, he must be lifted up in glory, the glory of the cross. Then, by this sign, they will come to him. Jesus is the seed of Abraham who fulfills God's promise that through him all the nations will be blessed.

I believe that Jesus draws on the prophetic book of Isaiah in the declaration that he must be lifted up. And I believe John was aware of this. Isaiah is a long and complex book with many themes and key terms. Three of those key terms are light, standard and sign. All three show up in the Gospel of John.

Isaiah connects light to the Messiah. Consider these three passages which could easily be at home, they could fit right in into the writing of John.

Isaiah 9:1–2 "... on the other side of Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles. The people who walk in darkness will see a great light; Those who live in a dark land, the light will shine on them."

Isaiah 42:6–7 “I am the Lord, I have called You in righteousness, I will also hold You by the hand and watch over You, and I will appoint You as a covenant to the people, as a light to the nations, to open blind eyes, to bring out prisoners from the dungeon and those who dwell in darkness from the prison.”

Isaiah 50:10 “Who is among you that fears the Lord, that obeys the voice of His servant, that walks in darkness and has no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord and rely on his God.”

The second key term, “standard”, is not repeated in John. But I believe it provides background to the idea of Jesus being lifted up for the peoples to see. In Isaiah, the standard is a banner, it’s a flag that is lifted up over an army to identify their allegiance. You know, who are you following? You follow the one who is depicted on your standard. The first use of a standard lifted up in Isaiah has the idea of Assyria and Babylon rallying to the standard of God calling them to come and judge Israel. It’s a standard of judgement. But that image shifts. The Messiah himself is the standard in Isaiah 11:10.

Then in that day the nations will resort to the root of Jesse, who will stand as a standard for the peoples; and His resting place will be glorious.

The standard is also raised to gather the people of Israel back from exile as in Isaiah 11:12.

And He will lift up a standard for the nations and assemble the banished ones of Israel, and will gather the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.

Later, the standard is raised up for all the redeemed of every nation, as in Isaiah 62:10.

Go through, go through the gates, clear the way for the people; build up, build up the highway, remove the stones, lift up a standard over the peoples.

This language of lifting up a standard connects with the third key term of “sign” in Isaiah. And that’s definitely a term that connects with the book of John. The standard is a sign. The first sign mentioned in Isaiah is Messianic. It is one we’re familiar with. Isaiah 7:14,

Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel.

The last sign in Isaiah is the one that connects even more with this lifting up of Jesus. It links to our passage in John. This is Isaiah 66:18-19.

For I know their works and their thoughts; the time is coming to gather all nations and tongues. And they shall come and see My glory. I will set a sign among them and will send survivors from them to the nations...

God is going to set up a sign, and in the sign they are going to see his glory, and it’s going to gather in people from every nation. Jesus has just declared here in John 12 that his hour has come, his hour of glory, when the Son of Man will be lifted up and so he will draw all men from himself. Jesus’ words fulfill the prophetic vision of Isaiah who declared that a standard will be raised up and it will be a sign to the nations, proclaiming the glory of God and drawing all peoples to him. That sign of glory to the nations prophesied by Isaiah is the cross.

But the people don’t get this. As has happened consistently, Jesus’ listeners do not connect his words with Old Testament truth. They have a narrow view of the Messiah. They pick and choose the verses they want to focus on, and they’re confused. Jesus’ proclamation does not sound like what they expect of him. They expect the Christ to establish an eternal reign for the kingdom of Israel. “The Christ must remain, right? But Jesus is saying the Son of Man must be lifted up. Lifted up how? Where? Does this mean the Christ will not remain? But we know he does. So then, are the Christ and the Son of Man two different people? Jesus is the Christ. We have proclaimed him such. So then, who is this Son of Man that must be lifted up?”

They’re confused but Jesus calls them to walk in the light. And just as at the beginning of chapter 11 and just as at the beginning of chapter 9, walking in the light does not necessarily mean that you understand what is going on. It is not your inner light that guides you. To walk in the light is to walk

with Jesus. He's the light. Over time as you walk with Jesus his light enables you to see more clearly, to understand life. But often, walking with Jesus means trusting that he knows where he is going even when you have no idea. You walk in the light without understanding exactly why or where it will all lead. Because it's his light. He's the one that sees clearly. Walk with him and you will be in the light whether it makes sense to you or not.

So Jesus said to them, "For a little while longer the Light is among you. Walk while you have the Light, so that darkness will not overtake you; he who walks in the darkness does not know where he goes."³⁶ While you have the Light, believe in the Light, so that you may become sons of Light." These things Jesus spoke, and He went away and hid Himself from them.

4. Isaiah explains the Jewish response to Jesus. (12:37-43)

Our fourth section calls on a witness from the word of God to explain to us this great lack of understanding, this lack of belief among God's own people. They believe in the Jesus they want, not the Jesus who is. How can they be so stubbornly misguided? John reminds us that we should not be surprised. He came to his own and his own did not receive him. That's what John told us. That reality was foretold even long before. Let's read John 12:37-43.

³⁷ But though He had performed so many signs before them, yet they were not believing in Him. ³⁸ *This was* to fulfill the word of Isaiah the prophet which he spoke: "Lord, who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?" ³⁹ For this reason they could not believe, for Isaiah said again, ⁴⁰ "He has blinded their eyes and He hardened their heart, so that they would not see with their eyes and perceive with their heart, and be converted and I heal them." ⁴¹ These things Isaiah said because he saw His glory, and he spoke of Him. ⁴² Nevertheless many even of the rulers believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they were not confessing *Him*, for fear that they would be put out of the synagogue; ⁴³ for they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God.

In his Gospel, John has emphasized the witness of Moses to Jesus and the witness of Abraham to Jesus, now he reminds us of the witness of Isaiah to Jesus, particularly to make this point that the Jewish rejection of the Messiah was foretold. The first Isaiah reference comes from the famous suffering servant song in Isaiah 53. It is 53:1, "Lord, who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?" 700 years before the birth of Jesus Christ Isaiah 53 declared that the Messiah would come. He would be pierced through for our transgressions. He would be led like a lamb to the slaughter. He would be assigned to a grave among the wicked. And the report of him would not be believed.

The second reference to Isaiah comes from chapter 6 which records the calling of Isaiah. It is Isaiah's testimony to his vision of the glory of the Lord. Seeing the glory of the Lord fill the temple Isaiah cried out, "Holy, Holy, Holy." He also saw his own sin and cried out, "Woe is me, for I am ruined!" And he saw God touch his lips with a burning coal and say, "your iniquity is taken away, and your sin is forgiven."

This is what happens when we see the glory of the Lord. We are at the same time made all the more aware of our own inglorious state, our own sin. But the glory of the Lord includes his love for us, so that he makes a way to take away our sin. Isaiah saw God, saw himself, and saw that he was forgiven.

Isaiah saw all this, and so, when God asked, "Whom shall I send [as my witness]," Isaiah responded, "Here I am send me." But it would not be an easy task to witness to the glory of God to this generation that Isaiah was called to. After calling him, God tells Isaiah this. This is the truth that John draws on also for his generation. The words John quotes are from Isaiah 6:10,

He has blinded their eyes and He hardened their heart, so that they would not see with their eyes and perceive with their heart, and be converted and I heal them.

This is a hard truth. God does not only say their eyes are blind. He says that he has blinded them, he has hardened them. One of the ways that God blinds is by shining the light. Taking Jesus' metaphor from chapter 3, those in the darkness hate the light. Giving more light does not open their eyes but

moves them to screw theirs shut even more tightly. The light itself brings about a response of willful blindness. It brings about clarification of the judgement that has already been proclaimed.

The hardening here, though, seems more complex than that. It may be in part a negative response to the light of Jesus but that does not fully explain God's sovereignty in the matter. People are responsible. God is sovereign. God planned not to open the eyes of these Jewish hearts. He allowed them to continue in their darkness in order to bring about the rejection of Jesus and ultimately the cross. Israel has rejected her Messiah because of the hardness of the human heart. God did not choose to do anything about that, he did not open their eyes. Their rejection of Jesus became the blessing of the world (Romans 11:11).

John writes in verse 41, "These things Isaiah said because he saw His glory, and he spoke of Him." Isaiah "saw his glory." Quite literally in chapter 6 he sees the glory of God filling the temple. But through his prophecy you see that he sees the glory of the Messiah, the Messiah is all the way through. John also says that Isaiah "spoke of Him." That is through the book of Isaiah, he speaks of the coming Messiah, it's quite clear in chapter 53, which John quotes here. Isaiah saw his glory and Isaiah spoke of him.

In spite of the overwhelming blindness of Israel, John can tell us in 42-43,

⁴² Nevertheless many even of the rulers believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they were not confessing *Him*, for fear that they would be put out of the synagogue; ⁴³ for they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God.

The word for "approval" in that last verse is actually the Greek word for "glory". We could translate the verse this way, "they loved the glory of men rather than the glory of God." It is hard to say whether this belief was real or not. It sounds real at the beginning of the verse, it doesn't sound real at the end of the verse. And that's this ambiguity that we have to struggle with in John; we don't really know.

Jesus is the one who accepts the shame of the cross to magnify the glory of God. Yet, these who are said come to believe in him hold on to the glory of man instead of giving it up for the glory of God. They're not following in the way of Jesus. So, what does their belief mean? We're not sure but Jesus said in verses 25-26,

²⁵ "He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal. ²⁶ "If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him.

5. Jesus testifies to himself. (12:44-50)

In our final section, Jesus testifies to himself. This testimony includes a promise and a judgment.

⁴⁴ And Jesus cried out and said, "He who believes in Me, does not believe in Me but in Him who sent Me. ⁴⁵ He who sees Me sees the One who sent Me. ⁴⁶ I have come *as* Light into the world, so that everyone who believes in Me will not remain in darkness. ⁴⁷ If anyone hears My sayings and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world. ⁴⁸ He who rejects Me and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day. ⁴⁹ For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me a commandment *as to* what to say and what to speak. ⁵⁰ I know that His commandment is eternal life; therefore the things I speak, I speak just as the Father has told Me."

It is fitting for this first part of the book of John to end with Jesus' own self-witness. As the Word who is with God and is God, he alone has truly intimate knowledge of the Father, he knows God. Jesus is the light and the light provides its own witness. No one can really adequately witness for him.

In these final words, Jesus sums up for us several themes of his public teaching. This summary is our conclusion to this lesson. Four things:

- 1) Jesus reaffirms the truth that belief in the Son is intrinsically tied to belief in the Father. You cannot truly believe in the one and reject the other. If you believe in the Son, you truly believe in the Father. If you believe in the Father, you will believe in the Son.
- 2) Jesus affirms himself as light to the world. He makes truth concrete by coming as a human being. If you believe in Jesus as he presents himself to be, then you have accepted the most fundamental truth of all reality. You do not remain in darkness if you start with Jesus.
- 3) We also get a restatement of the tension between salvation and judgment. As Jesus has said before, "I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world." At the same time, just as before, he clarifies that the world has already been judged and whoever rejects him now will be judged when they stand before God. Jesus does not need to be the one who judges because as he says here, "He who rejects Me and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day."
- 4) And finally fourth, this is the claim of Jesus: that the word of God is eternal life. And that word is what Jesus has spoken in perfect harmony with the will of the Father. It is left to us to believe or to not believe.

With these words Jesus completes his public ministry. We've seen the devotion of Mary, which gives honor, true honor to Jesus. Then the shouting of the crowd, "Hosanna. King of Israel", an honoring of Jesus in word that's true, though it wasn't in heart from the crowd. Then the coming of the Greeks provided Jesus with an opportunity to look ahead to the act of glory that must come and which will stand as a sign and draw all peoples to himself. Then the words of Isaiah remind us not to be surprised at the inability of Jesus' own people to see his glory. That was foretold. And with this final testimony of Jesus we receive a public promise and a warning.

The cross is a sign, a standard that will be raised up for all to see. It brings a promise of salvation to all who believe. It also establishes the just judgment on all who refuse to trust in him for salvation that they accept on themselves their own penalty of death. The hour of his glory has come.

Reflection questions

1. Read John 12. If you have time, pause after each section (12:1-11; 12-19; 20-36; 37-43 and 44-50) and write down what stands out to you as important or confusing or interesting. If you do not have time, then read the chapter as one whole and write down what stands out to you keeping in mind the relationship between the five parts.
2. What adjectives would you associated with Mary's action towards Jesus?
3. What adjectives would you associated with Judas?
4. What adjectives would you associate with the crowd in 12-19?
5. What adjectives would you associate with the Greeks and with the two disciples in 20-36?
6. As you think back over the Gospel of John, what passages come to mind when you think about Jesus' hour of glory? What is Jesus' hour of glory? How is it connected with this third statement about the son of man being lifted up?
7. Though Jesus does not seem to address the issue of the Greeks right away, how does he come back to them?
8. What significance do you see in John quoting from Isaiah 53 and Isaiah 6? What is the immediate theological point John is answering? What other themes might he be drawing in with these quotes?
9. Thinking back over the Gospel of John how does the reference to light in 44-50 help to appropriately sum up Jesus' public ministry?