



International Bible Study Commentary

Verse-by-Verse Bible Lessons Thru the Bible

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John 12:44-50 Commentary New Revised Standard Version

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further follow the verse-by-verse [International Bible Study Commentary](#). **Study Hints for Discussion and Thinking Further** will help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion: these hints are available on the *International Bible Study Commentary* website along with the *International Bible Lesson* that you may want to read to your class as part of your Bible study. You can discuss each week's commentary and lesson at the [International Bible Study Forum](#).

(John 12:44) Then Jesus cried aloud: “Whoever believes in me believes not in me but in him who sent me.

The verses in this Bible lesson are the last public words of Jesus to the crowds in Jerusalem. In a few days, He would be crucified. Beginning with John chapter 13, Jesus teaches His disciples as much as He wisely can and as much as they can receive before His crucifixion. Otherwise, He speaks to those who arrest Him, when He is on trial before the priests and Pilate, when He hangs on the cross, and when He appears to the women and His disciples after His resurrection from the dead before He ascends into heaven. From now on, crowds will only learn about Jesus after He sends the Holy Spirit into His disciples on the Day of Pentecost and from the Bible when they hear God's Word written preached and taught through the Church. In John 20:30-31, John wrote about the purpose of His book and the teaching of the disciples, “Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.” The same purpose can be said for the entire New Testament.

The importance of receiving Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord can be seen in the fact that Jesus, with a breaking heart, shouted out as loud as He could to the crowd for His hearers to believe in Him and also believe in the One who sent Him: the Father in heaven. When Jesus shouted the words, “believes **not** in me,” He meant that believers were not to believe *in Him alone or in Him as a substitute for believing in God the Father or the God of the Bible*: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It makes no sense for someone to say, “I don’t believe in God, but I do believe in Jesus” or “I follow Jesus because He was a great prophet and a wise teacher, not the Son of God.” Because of Jesus’ teachings about God the Father and God the Son always acting and speaking as one in total agreement, Jesus could not only be a prophet or a good moral philosopher. He is who He said He was.

(John 12:45) And whoever sees me sees him who sent me.

Jesus expects true believers in Him to interpret these words about himself and the Father spiritually (not physically or as an encouragement to try to create mental images of them in bodily form). Jesus expects believers to learn about His divine nature and His moral and spiritual attributes from the Bible, which are the same divine nature and moral and spiritual attributes of God His Father. If we see how Jesus loved God and others, even His enemies, and if we see how Jesus always used His divine power in compassionate ways to save the world (not to condemn the world), and if we see how Jesus loved us so much to die to save us while we were still His enemies; then, we begin to understand that Jesus is God, the Son of God, as He claimed. God the Father also uses His divine power in compassionate ways because He and Jesus have the same divine attributes. If we see Jesus as He is (not completely, but truly, because we are finite and physical), then we see as much of God the Father as we possibly can with the help of the Holy Spirit using the truth of the Bible to help us. Jesus did not mean that He and the Father are the same Person with different roles to play, but they are two Persons with identical spiritual attributes and qualities. We can think ever more deeply and learn about the Father and the Son as we pray and read the Bible with the help of the Holy Spirit, but we will not know all God wants us to know about them until we meet them after Jesus comes again and we receive our resurrected and glorified human bodies.

(John 12:46) I have come as light into the world, so that everyone who believes in me should not remain in the darkness.

Jesus said once again that He came as light into the world. In John 1:1 and 1:9, we learned that in Jesus “was life, and the life was the light of all people” and Jesus is “The true light, which enlightens everyone.” In the context of the previous chapters we have studied, we know that Jesus referred to himself as “light” in ways that remind us that the LORD God is light. In Psalms 27:1, David prayed, “*The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?*” We know from the New Testament that Jesus is our light and salvation because He came to save the world. He gave us life, and He came to give eternal life to all who would believe in Him as Lord and Savior. The Lord Jesus is our defense and the stronghold of our life, so we have no one to fear. In John 14:27, Jesus encouraged His disciples (and us) saying, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.” Jesus still gives God’s peace to believers in Him, so we do not need to let our hearts be troubled or be afraid.

Jesus also reminded the crowd, His disciples, and all believers in Him that there are two kinds of people. When they learn about Jesus, one kind of people remain in darkness and the other kind of people come into the light. Jesus did not want people to remain in darkness, so He came as light into the world and preached: “Everyone who believes in me should not remain in the darkness.” Those who hear the truth about Jesus should not remain in darkness, but some choose to remain in darkness because their deeds are evil. Remember what Jesus said and what we studied in John 3:19-20, “And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed.” Those who hated the light and wanted to do evil eventually crucified Jesus instead of coming to the light. No wonder Jesus cried out as loud as He could to warn those in the crowd who would listen.

(John 12:47) I do not judge anyone who hears my words and does not keep them, for I came not to judge the world, but to save

the world.

Because Jesus came to save the world, at that time He did not “judge” in the sense of “condemn” those who heard His words but did not keep them. We know from experience as believers in Jesus that keeping or obeying Jesus’ words perfectly requires the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit who Jesus would not give to His followers until after His death and resurrection. Keeping Jesus’ words is a matter of spiritual growth as we learn the truth and the Holy Spirit helps us. We call this the process of sanctification and we consecrate ourselves daily to learn Jesus’ words and pray for the Holy Spirit to help us live according to Jesus’ words in our daily practice.

(John 12:48) The one who rejects me and does not receive my word has a judge; on the last day the word that I have spoken will serve as judge,

Believers know they are unable to hear and keep Jesus’ words completely and perfectly, so they draw closer to Jesus for help in hearing and keeping His words. They know Jesus loves them and they love Jesus. However, those who want to remain in darkness will reject Jesus and His words. They do not love God and they will not try to love God. For love of God and Jesus, they will not strive to understand Jesus’ words and obey Jesus’ words. Notice: Jesus promised that there will come a time of judgment for those who reject Jesus and His teachings. On the last day, the day of judgment, the word (the message or the teachings) of Jesus will serve as judge. The one judged will know that he has not kept or tried to keep, but has rejected, what he learned about Jesus and His teachings. When the unbeliever faces God on the last day, he will learn that God is just, and he will remember that he rejected the way of salvation that God provided and graciously revealed to him in Christ Jesus. He will know he deserves just condemnation, and he will have no excuse for rejecting God in Christ.

(John 12:49) for I have not spoken on my own, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment about what to say and what to speak.

When an unbeliever rejects Jesus, he also rejects the Father who sent Him. Jesus did not speak on His own authority. Jesus did not teach different moral and spiritual standards from those of His Father. Jesus did not teach ideas based on His own understanding of how the world works and how to get along with others. Jesus did not speak on his own or share his own beliefs and ideas as we might do. Rather, the Father sent Jesus into the world with a commandment. Notice: a God-given commandment to obey is of greater significance than a command that someone might receive from a parent, an employer, a politician, or a religious leader. God the Father gave Jesus a commandment like the Ten Commandments, the Law of Love. God gave Jesus a loving commandment regarding all He was to say (no more and no less than His Father told Him to say) and what He was to speak (the teachings of God the Father and God the Son—truths they both knew and in perfect agreement wanted to share with us). As a commandment, the Word made flesh came to share truths of God and reality with us. Jesus said His words were the words of God; therefore, His words would serve as judge. His words were all that were needed for the passing of judgement on those who rejected the Son and the Father, as revealed to us by the Son and accurately recorded in the Bible.

(John 12:50) And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I speak, therefore, I speak just as the Father has told me.”

In John 17:3, Jesus defined eternal life: “And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.” The commandment Jesus received from the Father was that He might make known the Father, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, the only true Son of God, whom the Father sent. When believers receive the gift of eternal life, they begin to personally know the Father and the Son, and we cannot know them until Jesus reveals himself and the Father to us. God speaks to us through the Bible as the Holy Spirit gives us understanding, and we speak to God as we love, pray, and obey God. To receive the gift of eternal life and not perish, we must receive the Father, Jesus, and the truths Jesus came to reveal. Jesus came to reveal the truth about the Father (the only true God) to us and the truth about himself (the only true Son of God) to us. In order for us as believers in Jesus to obey Jesus and His

words, Jesus prayed to the Father for us as recorded in John 17:17-20, “Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, so that they also may be sanctified in truth. I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word.” In behalf of those we seek to teach the words of Jesus, we pray, consecrate, and sanctify ourselves so they may be sanctified in the truth of God in Christ, and be saved from darkness and destruction through faith in Him—that people might not remain in darkness but come to the light.

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. If you believe in Jesus, who did Jesus say you also believe in? If you see Jesus, who did Jesus say you also see?
2. How did Jesus come into the world?
3. Why did Jesus come in that way into the world?
4. On the last day, what will serve as judge of those who reject Jesus?
5. What commandment did the Father give Jesus? What did Jesus say about His Father’s commandment?

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