



**Sermon Study Guide**  
**The Beginning of the End: The Son is One with the Father**  
**John 12:44-50**

**Introduction: Jesus is more than a man; he is God**

- Long before C. S. Lewis challenged the skeptic to see Jesus as either liar, lunatic or Lord, the American theologian J. Gresham Machen challenged us to accept the fact that the Jesus of the Bible is either the divine Messiah or a madman:

*There can be no real doubt, in the mind of an historian who examines the facts, but that Jesus of Nazareth regarded Himself as the Messiah . . . not merely in some lower meaning of the term, but that He was one day to sit upon the throne of God . . . Would not such a person have been, if not actually insane, at least unbalanced and unworthy of the full confidence of men?<sup>1</sup>*

- John 12:44-50 is a turning point in John. In chapter 13, Jesus turns his attention to a small band of disciples. But in John 12, Jesus preaches his last sermon to a skeptical audience. He summarizes all of his preaching in just a few, short sentences. He presents himself, one more time, as the divine Messiah.

**Overview of John 12:44-50**

- First, in verses 44-46 Jesus explains the value of believing in him. To believe in him is actually to believe in the Father who sent him. To see him is to see the Father. Therefore, if you know Jesus, you actually know the very creator of the universe. To believe in him is also to be in the light. That's the radical claim of verse 46.
- Second, in verses 47-48 Jesus explains the danger of *not* believing in him. These verses are a little confusing because on one hand Jesus says he is not the judge, while on the other hand he says his word brings judgment. So, in what sense is Jesus *not* the judge? In verse 47 Jesus is explaining why he came into the world. He didn't come to judge it, but to save it. The world was already in rebellion against God, already condemned by God, and already hell bound. In a sense, the world had already been judged. And yet, one day, everyone will stand before Jesus and face judgment (Acts 10:42; John 5:22). Jesus did not come to judge the world, but there is no escaping the fact that his gospel will bring judgment.
- Third, in verses 49-50, Jesus explains the reason to believe in him. He speaks with the Father's authority. Jesus' word is like a certified check—a check signed by the bank that guarantees payment. The Father has signed Jesus' check—the Father guarantees the truthfulness of Jesus' words and his power to save. And not only that, the Father gives the Son a "commandment"—and his commandment is eternal life. The Old Testament Law only brought the recognition of sin (Romans 3:29) and with it, death

and judgment. But the New Commandment is a word of grace that brings life. All who repent and believe this commandment will live forever.

### **A Pressing Question: Why Should We Take Jesus at His Word?**

- John is eager for all of his readers (in the 1<sup>st</sup> century and the 21<sup>st</sup>) to believe in Jesus (see John 20:31). Jesus' final words in this last, public sermon are a call to believe in him, a call to trust him. In these verses we find three answers to the question, "Why should we take Jesus at his word?" These answers summarize themes that can be found throughout John 1-12.
- First, because Jesus is the light.
  - John 12:46: *"I have come into the world as light."* This metaphor is used throughout John (see 1:4; 3:19; 8:12). Jesus came into the world like a torch entering a pitch-black cave. Before we followed Jesus, we were in that cave. We couldn't see God, understand his plan or comprehend his character. But light came through the Word. We came to see God for who he is: holy, good, just, wrathful, righteous and majestic.
  - Through the light of the Word we came to see ourselves for who we are. We came to see ourselves not merely as weak, but as sinful. We stopped overlooking our faults as minor, unimportant flaws but as rebellion against a righteous and holy God.
  - Through the light of the Word we came to change. Look carefully at John 8:12, *"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."* Those who truly have Jesus' light walk in his light.
  - Study Questions
    - How has the light of Jesus' word changed the way you view God and yourself?
    - How has being a Christian changed the way you live?
    - We turn to the light to guide us. What people, places, or things are you tempted to turn to for guidance?
- Second, because Jesus is the Lord.
  - Look again at verses 44-45. To believe in Jesus is to believe in the Father. To see Jesus is to see the Father. Therefore, we should conclude that Jesus is one with the Father. He is Lord. This is the clear teaching throughout John (see 1:1; 5:18; 8:19; 10:27-30).
  - Jesus is more than an example to follow; he is the Lord. He may share humanity with us, but we must not forget that he shares divinity with the Father. No wonder, then, that when doubting Thomas saw the resurrected Christ he called out in John 20:28, *"My Lord, and my God."* Therefore, Jesus alone is worthy of our worship.
  - Study questions:
    - Who are some of the people in your life who have influenced you? Jesus has influenced you, too. But how would you explain to someone that Jesus is not just another influence in your life?

- An idol, today, is anything you are tempted to worship instead of Christ. What idols in your life have you seen shattered at the feet of all-powerful Jesus?
- If Jesus is Lord, he must be obeyed. What does it look like in your life to obey Jesus?
- Third, because Jesus is the Lamb.
  - Jesus' last public words present him as Savior (12:47, 50). He came to save lost sinners, to give himself for the spiritually dead so that they might have eternal life. Again and again in John, we are told that Jesus came to deal with our sin, to die on our behalf, and to give us life (see 3:16; 5:21; 10:9-11). John the Baptist, upon seeing Jesus, said, "*Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world*" (1:29).
  - Jesus' death for sinners is at the core of his mission. He came to save rebels from the wrath of God by dying on the cross, in their place, for their sin. Each of us was born spiritually dead. We were rebellious, condemned, hell bound sinners. But the Father, because of his great love, sent Jesus to be the Lamb of God—to die on the cross as a substitute for sinners just like us.
  - Study questions
    - Why is it especially humbling to confess that Jesus is the Lamb?
    - If Jesus' death is at the heart of the gospel, why do so many people take it for granted?
    - How can you keep from taking the cross for granted?
    - What would it look like to make confession of sin a regular part of your life?

### **A Word of Encouragement**

- Because Jesus is the Light and the Lord and the Lamb, we can trust him. He speaks the truth. Not only that, if Jesus is all these things, it means that we don't have to be the light of our lives, the lord of our lives, or the lamb of our lives. In other words, we don't have to seek guidance from within our hearts, we don't have to rely on ourselves to know right from wrong, and we don't have to earn our way into God's favor.
- Study questions
  - What are some ways you are tempted to be the light, the lord and the lamb?
  - Will you spend a few moments giving thanks that Jesus is all this for you?

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<sup>i</sup>J. Gresham Machen, *What is Faith?* (Banner of Truth), 140.