

Record of Sermons delivered during the month of
January 2018

(added progressively after each Sunday)

(see following pages)

God Glorified in the Raising of Lazarus – part 3

Per S Olyott

(Review of last week) -

Over the past two weeks we have been looking at the lessons Chapter 11 of John's eyewitness account of the Ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ have shown. We are considering how these lessons related to four groups of people.

- So far we have found that the sisters Martha and Mary learnt that; death is not a tragedy to the believer; Christ is individually concerned for His people; His sympathy is limitless; and His power is boundless.
- Then we began to consider the disciples. They were shown that against the 'wisdom' of the world, those whose task it is to do God's works, must work in the 'day' because in the night they will not be able to. That in doing God's work we have a 'day' that has a limited duration and a predetermined ending. Dangers are not to cause us to delay or neglect our work. If we do, our 'fruits' will be less than they should be.

However as we look deeper in the chapter we see that from Christ's own actions there is a common sense proviso:

Look at verse 54: ⁵⁴ *Jesus therefore no longer walked openly among the Jews, but went from there to the region near the wilderness, to a town called Ephraim¹, and there he stayed with the disciples.*

If a specific task is to be done. So be it. Whatever the danger. In such a case danger is to be defied. But we are not to deliberately court danger. That's 'tempting Providence'.

When Jesus knows that they are plotting against His life for the third time, He retires again into a wilderness. A life of service is not the same as 'dashing around like a chook with it's head cut off'.

When Jesus has to do something which is within His Father's will, then what has to be done will be done regardless of the danger. Because He knows that He won't be removed from the scene until the 'hour strikes on God's clock'. But nevertheless He doesn't deliberately court danger. So the chapter ends with His quietly going about His Ministry – training His disciples, in a wilderness.

Olyott gives a local illustration of this principle. It is the time of the 'troubles' in Ireland. South Armagh is a particularly dangerous place to be. (circa 1969).

“You understand clearly that the Lord wants you to preach the Gospel in South Armagh, so go and defy the danger. But that's a rather different thing from taking your family on holiday there.

¹ Ephraim lay in the wild, uncultivated hill-country, thirteen miles to the north-east of [Jerusalem](#), "perched on a conspicuous eminence and with an extensive view"

If it's clear to you that God wants you to do a particular thing. “Do it, whatever the danger!” says Jesus, “You can't be removed from this scene until God wills.”² Don't put the thing off just because it's dangerous or difficult to do it. Nevertheless by His own example He tells us not to deliberately court danger.

Paul in the Acts of the Apostles goes into the most dangerous situations because the Gospel must be preached there. But we see him 'moving on' nevertheless in dangerous situations when just to remain would be to tempt providence – to foolishly court danger.

From the example of our Lord none of you should be put off from doing right – doing right is always difficult. When you make difficulties a reason for not doing right, your moral courage and Christ-likeness is then on the wane.

- Now we come to the third of the groups of people that Chapter 11 draws lessons from:
(verse 45) ⁴⁵ *Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what he did, believed in him,* There they were in this home crying because of Lazarus' death. Lazarus was respected in the community, and before long people were actually coming from Jerusalem to comfort the sisters. When Jesus came Martha went out to meet Him. Then Mary and the mourners left the house to join them. As Jesus and the two sisters went to the tomb a great crowd had gone with them. When Lazarus had 'come out' a great crowd had witnessed it. To some of them that was all they needed. It was clear to them then that Jesus is whom He says He is, and they believed.

But now look at verse 46: ⁴⁶ *but some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done.* Then we read of a council meeting. It is plain that the Religious Leaders, some of whom had witnessed this miracle, were jealous of the following that Jesus was getting. They were also fearful of what the Romans might think: if many more people were to follow Jesus they might interpret it that the Jews were revolting and that the Romans would step in, destroy the Temple and the people. Caiaphas, the High Priest, says, “There's only one solution to this problem: it's the death of Christ.” In fact as High Priest that year, without realising it, he spoke prophetically: that one man should die for the people. Jesus did of course: but not in the limited sense that this Priest understood it. He was 'a prophet and he didn't know it'!

John's parenthetical commentary at verse 52 sums it up. ⁵² *and not for the nation only, but also to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad.* Jesus had come to die for the people – the people the Father had given Him before the foundation of the world.

² ⁹ Jesus answered, “Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. ¹⁰ But if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him.” **Ellicott's Commentary** (9) Are there not twelve hours in the day?—Or more exactly, Are not the hours of the day twelve? They had expressed their fears that danger and death would be the result of going into Judæa. His answer would say that the darkness of the night which they dreaded could not come yet. The natural night would come not until its appointed hour, until the twelve hours of the day had run their course. The day of His life is marked out by limits no less sure. The night indeed cometh, but it is as yet full day, and in that day He and they must do the work which is appointed of the Father. (Comp. John 11:6; and Notes on John 2:4; John 7:30; John 8:20; John 9:4; John 12:27; John 17:1.)

The point to notice here was that the same act: quickened faith in some and hatred in others. Some of the people who saw Lazarus come out of the tomb by the Word of Christ, believed. While some of them at the same event were filled with jealousy and fury and hatred and went straight back to Jerusalem and a plot was hatched to kill Him sooner rather than later.

The same event quickened faith on the one hand and hatred on the other.

That's what the plagues on Egypt did! Here was the children of Israel in Egypt and God plagues the Egyptians. Pharaoh's heart is actually 'hardened' by what God says and does. Becoming more and more resolute that He will 'not let the people go'.

That's what the preaching of the Gospel does! The very Gospel preached that brought you to the call of God at conversion would have actually angered other people who were never more opposed to the Gospel than they were from that moment. The very Gospel that brought you into joy and faith so that you believed on Christ, actually made other people never come to Church again.

The reason is shown by the old illustration of the 'clay and the wax'.

The sun shines down. Here is a lump of clay and also a lump of wax. The clay becomes harder and harder – because it is clay, that's its nature. The wax becomes softer and softer under the same sun – because that's its nature. The same sun – the same event – makes some harder and some softer, because they are different in their natures!

That's what happened here. Through this great event the Spirit of God gave some people a new nature so this great event was able to soften their hearts and they 'came to faith'. While others still had their old nature and the same event actually made them harder than they were before. So it is with every 'event' in the world. Even the preaching of this sermon – initially last Century and on the internet so many times since – fulfils God's decrees of election and reprobation³. Some who hear will be closer to Christ as a consequence, while others will be harder to the things of God.

- The final group is ... us!
There are things for us to learn: not just for Martha and Mary, the sisters; the disciples; or even the Jews. Just a few as follows:

This miracle was a 'sign'. We have seen in John's Gospel that every physical miracle in the Gospel is also a 'picture' of a spiritual truth. When the Saviour acted in the physical realm it was to teach you a spiritual truth.

We saw that when a man's physical eyes were opened, that this was a clear symbol of his spiritual eyes being opened. So we can conclude that when a man is physically raised from the dead, it's a symbol of somebody being spiritually raised from the dead. There are people everywhere in the world who are

³ WCF 3:3 **Everlasting Life and Death**: By God's decision, some human beings and angels are appointed before hand to everlasting life, and others assigned beforehand to everlasting death, for the display of His glory. [1 Tim 5:21, Matt 25:41, Rom 9:22-23, Eph 1:5-6, Prov 16:4]

spiritually dead. Jesus 'passes by' as His words are repeated. His teaching is given. His disciples present his Word in the world. Yet many people do not hear it, heed it, nor come to Him. Because they are spiritually dead. It has no effect on them, except to make them harder.

Yet we see the voice of Christ alone raises some people from this death. Everybody had given up on Lazarus. The widow's son at Nain was on the way to his funeral. He'd only been dead a few hours. (Luke 7:11-16). Jairus' daughter, dead only a short while. Because the servants who came to tell Jesus as He journeyed there that she had just died. (Matthew 9:18-26). But this man Lazarus had been dead four days. Everybody had given up on Lazarus.

There are some people whom you have given up on. They are spiritually dead. You've prayed for them for years. No response. You've spoken to them often. No response. Witnessed, written letters (or emails), loved them, had them into your home, they may have been to church – heard the Gospel preached. Even read Christian books and newspapers! Still no response. You've given up on them. They're dead. Spiritually dead. Far gone. "Nothing can happen to them", you say. But a Word from Christ can raise them from the dead. Keep giving them the word; the word of Christ; the word of God.

At God's choice and in His time, He may make that Word effective in that person. They may yet be raised to spiritual life.

This chapter teaches not to give up on anybody.

Lessons also about prayer:

You want to know why God delays answers to your prayer? Because He's going to show you something much more wonderful than you imagine or expect, than if He answered right away. Did Jesus pray? Yes! (verse 41 & 42 " ... *And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. ⁴² I knew that you always hear me, but I said this on account of the people standing around, that they may believe that you sent me."* Did Jesus pray with faith – praying with faith is when you say, "Father I know that you have heard me". That's the height to which to rise.

Then we note: there were a group of powerful men plotting against Christ and yet their very words bring to pass Christ's purposes and their very actions fulfil the plans of God. All over the world today there are groups of people, plotting against the Gospel. People at work who hate the Gospel. People who have the platform of television and other mass media, who hate the Gospel. Politicians who lead parades of debauchery, who show they hate the Gospel. People who will slander you and attempt to ridicule the fact that, ... you profess Christ.

Yet the great and comforting thought is that every word they speak, every action they take, actually serves the purpose of God. He doesn't condone their sin, but He is sovereign in such a way that even the activities of wicked men actually serve His purposes rather than frustrate them.

But the main lesson to be learned from this chapter is that it displays the love and power of Christ. The intention of the chapter is to bring you all to the confession of verse 27, to see Christ as He is portrayed here and to say: *“Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world.”*

Do you believe this?

[2043]

May this be truly so for all the saints gathered here today.

Jesus: Your Enemy; A Celebrity; or A Friend?

Per S Olyott

(Review of last week) -

AD 30. A Sunday in April. (The start of Spring – 'new life' – in the Northern Hemisphere.) We have just commenced the 1988th year since then.

Back then everybody is speculating if Jesus will 'go up' to Jerusalem this Passover. And He did!

The first things that happened at this momentous Passover festival are described in John chapter 12 (in fact starting at verse 55 in Chapter 11).

A remarkable chapter since, towards the end (verse 41) we read: ⁴¹ *Isaiah said these things because he saw his glory and spoke of him. 740 years earlier than this time in Jerusalem, Isaiah had gone into the Temple and had a remarkable vision (6:1-4). There, without leaving the Temple he was able to see into that other dimension, seeing the throne of Yahweh. In front of this throne were the seraphim. They covered their 'feet', such was their modesty; and their faces, because they couldn't look on the glory of Yahweh. With the remaining wings they were ready to fly to obey His commandments. Here Isaiah was overcome with this sight of God's glory. He cried, "Woe is me I am a wretched man – I'm undone – a man of unclean lips. I'm in a Nation of unclean lips. Yet my eyes have seen the King." He heard the seraphim crying, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of Hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory."*

That Yahweh which Isaiah saw, says John in 12:41 – referring to that incident, with some of the words spoken on that occasion – the glorious God which Isaiah saw is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ who rode 740 years later, on an ass, into Jerusalem.

Although this identity is made clear in Chapter 12, we see three attitudes to Christ.

- Some people are seen to treat Christ as an Enemy!

Look at the last verse of Chapter 11: ⁵⁷ *Now the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where he was, he should let them know, so that they might arrest him.*

As we have already learned from earlier weeks: that to 'arrest Him' was a precursor to having Him killed.

The glorious God, is coming as the man, Christ Jesus, into Jerusalem, and yet there are some who are going to treat Him like an enemy.

- Then there's a second attitude to Christ.
There are others in Jerusalem, who are going to treat Him as a Celebrity.
Verse 9. ⁹ *When the large crowd of the Jews learned that Jesus was there, they came, not only on account of him but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised*

from the dead. And we see from the text that the 'Word', He who had raised Lazarus from the dead, was entering Jerusalem. Not only do crowds go with Him, but they come out from Jerusalem to meet Him. They say, in effect, "This must be the promised one, who will deliver us from the Romans. It really must be Him. At last!" In verse 13 they cry, "*Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!*" The excitement is so great that even Gentiles, Greeks, who happen to be in Jerusalem because they had a respect for the Jewish faith and joined in the Jewish Worship and ceremonies – such as Passover: they also want to see Jesus and are pressing to see Him.

So while some treat Him as an enemy, others treat Him as a celebrity. Either an enemy to be killed or a celebrity to be admired.

- Just a few treat Him as a friend.

Verses 1 to 3: ¹*Six days before the Passover, Jesus therefore came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead.* ²*So they gave a dinner for him there. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those reclining with him at table.* ³*Mary therefore took a pound of expensive ointment made from pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.*

Mary had broken into her 'treasure' – perhaps like a pre-paid funeral, set aside for her own funeral – to anoint Jesus.

Those few that treat Him as a friend, welcome Him.

Why do those who treat Him as an enemy do so?

We are told why back at chapter 11, verse 48: "... *If we let Him go on like this, everyone will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.*"

"We can't let Him Go on, because He's becoming too popular." And now in chapter 12 they say: "*Look, the world has gone after him.*" (verse 19) They can't abide the thought that Jesus is stealing the attention that they want for themselves. Nor the thought that the Romans will interpret it as a revolution and will come in to spoil everything that they love.

Why did others treat Him as a celebrity?

Because of what He had done for Lazarus. Four times, in this chapter we are told that people came to see Jesus because He was the One who had raised Lazarus from the dead. He had done something for somebody else and the news had got around. It was just the desire to see a 'wonder worker'.

Why did just that small group treat Him like a friend to be welcomed?

Chapter 11:27: Tells us what they thought of Christ there in that little house in Bethany. They knew Christ not just as somebody who had done something to somebody else. They knew Christ as someone who had done something for them. But they had another conviction: Mary said, on behalf of that tight-knit little family, "Yes, Lord. I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world." They knew, through the spiritual insight, granted by grace to them, the real identity of Christ.

They too, although they never had had Isaiah's vision, knew the Jesus Christ was the Son of God, who had come into the world.

So three views of Christ.

There are still three views of Christ.

Many today treat Him like an enemy. They don't want Him in their life. They want Him out! He's an inconvenience. An embarrassment. It would be better if He wasn't on the scene at all.

Some, even in the church, treat Him only as a celebrity. Jesus is wonderful. What He's done is wonderful. (You can hear the chanted choruses over and over again.) But that's as far as it goes. Where is the worship of God? Where is the obedience? Where is the changed life brought about by the indwelling Spirit? Why is it all about 'me'?

Then some of you treat Him like a friend. You recognise His true identity and you submit to Him. As this chapter reminds you, you can really identify with Mary and Martha and Lazarus. You can't put yourself in the shoes of the Chief Priest and the Pharisees. You can't even put yourself comfortably in the shoes of the people who welcomed Him and shouted hosanna in the streets.

But you feel you could be like Martha: serve Him at table. Or you could be like Lazarus and sit with Him there to enjoy His company. Or you could be like Mary with some extravagant act of love.

Those are the three different attitudes to Christ.

Both the enemies and the small group of friends knew that Jesus was going to die: the enemies knew it because they were plotting it; Mary knew it. That's why she anointed Him against the day of His burying.

So the next thing we learn from this chapter is that Jesus says three things about His death:

- Firstly He discloses the details. Verses 32 & 33: ³² *And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.* ³³ *He said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die.*

For us, in our own life, that is an unanswered question. What death will you die? Unless Christ comes first, we shall all die. That's settled for us. We know that. But what death will you die?

Jesus speaks to those enemies; celebrity seekers; and friends alike giving them the details of His death. His death will be a 'lifting up'. That's the words He uses. What other words could be used for crucifixion? Every other form of execution and every other form of natural dying cannot be described as a 'lifting up'. But there is our Lord alluding to it, so that afterwards they could see that He had clearly predicted it. He also makes it plain that other hands will lift Him up. "... *when I am lifted up* ... That will be the way that He dies.

- However the second thing He tells us about His death is that it is no accident.

You might surmise that because other people were going to put Him to death – that's what He predicted – that He was predicting a tragedy or an accident. Something outside of His choice. But He wasn't. Verse 23: ²³ *And Jesus answered them, "The hour **has come** for the Son of Man to be glorified.*

As we have been following the events of earlier chapters of John's Gospel we have seen that people have been plotting against Christ or some great thing has happened that indicates that surely His death is about to happen. Yet the common retort was that His *hour had not yet come*. Chapter after chapter has spoken of *the hour, the hour!* The technical term, the code word, which is used for His death. Because His death is a planned death, not an accident. And being a planned death it's on God's timetable. There's a specific time and place for it.

Up till now the hour has NOT come. But now the hour has come. The wheels will now be set in motion which will result in His crucifixion on the following Friday.

This death will be no accident. Look at verse 27: ²⁷ *"Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? But for this purpose I have come to this hour. ²⁸ Father, glorify your name."*

He talks about His hour as something to which He comes. The very purpose for His being in the world: that He should come to this hour and die!

So although sinful hands are going to crucify Jesus of Nazareth, who is the Yahweh whom Isaiah saw, it is no accident. It is planned. And as He tells us at the end of the chapter "He's been sent by His Father."

- The third thing He tells us about His death, is that His death will accomplish something.

Verse 24: ⁴ *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.*

Our Lord uses a simple illustration that even the smallest child could understand. "Here is a grain of corn. As long as I hold it in my hand; keep it in my house; or leave it in the barn, that's all it remains – just a grain of corn. But if I place it in the ground and it 'dies', from its death comes 'fruit'. The death of the corn brings forth much fruit. It is fruitful!"

The Lord is using this illustration to show that His death was essential and would accomplish something. Something would result from it. He tells us what some of these things are, which will result from His death:

(verse 23) ²³ *And Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.* The cross glorified Christ. That's one of the fruits of the cross. Jesus went to the cross in perfect obedience. Because His obedience is perfect, His reward is perfect. Therefore as the 'man' Christ Jesus – although He continues to be the everlasting God – as the 'man' Christ Jesus He is raised to the highest place of all, because of His perfect obedience at the cross.

Christian believers thus – as they give glory to Christ, in a variety of ways –

they glorify Him supremely, giving Him worship supremely, for what He did for sinners like yourselves on the cross.

A fruit of the cross (a 'fruit' from the grain of corn dying) is that Jesus Himself is glorified.

(verse 28) Contemplating the cross Jesus says, ²⁸ *Father, glorify your name.* Then a voice came from heaven: *"I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again."*

There are times when we as Christians, stand back in amazement at the wisdom and genius of God. Because at the cross all the demands of God's love and justice are satisfied. Your sin deserves punishment so it is punished on the Substitute. In that way you are delivered from the punishment and rescued from what your sin deserves.

God's love and God's justice meet at Calvary and as we look at the cross, we are amazed at the divine genius. So that our hearts well up with thanks to God. It because of the cross that the Father is glorified. Another 'fruit' of the cross!

There are many more: Verse 31. ³¹ *Now is the judgement of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out.* Christ's perfect obedience means a perfect reward. One of the rewards is that He is to be judge of all. A 'fruit' of the cross is the judgement. That means that evil will be put down and only righteousness will be exalted. The cross guarantees that.

At the cross, the same verse, the ruler of this world (Satan) is cast out. He had power over the human race, but His power is broken. Now only Jesus Christ has in His hands the 'keys of death' and the grave.⁴

Verse 32: ³² *And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.* Jesus doesn't mean every man and woman, every boy and girl, how could He. The same chapter teaches that the majority of people reject Him. The Chief Priest, the Pharisees and the Scribes were plotting against His life and hated Him.

But it is a fact that when the message of the cross is preached: when, Jesus Christ crucified and now resurrected, is held aloft in preaching throughout the world: – Jews, Gentiles, any racial group, men & women – are saved through the Gospel message. All and any category of human, through the insight given by the Spirit, will be represented in those who are drawn to Christ, Himself. All sorts of people are represented in those that are draw to Him.

There is a strong attractive power in the preaching of the cross. It wasn't in vain!

[2527]

May this be truly so for all the saints gathered here today.

Next week we continue with this chapter. The cross was not in vain. People are drawn to Christ. The result is they believe on Him. So we will consider 3 things that are taught about believing and 3 about denial.

⁴ Satan's role of accuser (with which he tempts and threatens death for the sins he encourages) is overcome by Christ's obedience, sacrifice and exaltation. The believer no longer experiences this death since Christ has borne it. In addition the fear of death itself is removed from the believer as it is but a portal to eternal life. This is how martyrs have been able to go to death with confidence. [Heb 2:14; Rev 12:10; John 12:31; Zechariah 3:1-1]

Jesus: Your Enemy; A Celebrity; or A Friend? – Believing

Per S Olyott

(Review of last week) -

We continue with Chapter 12, having found that: the cross was not in vain; people are drawn to Christ; the result is they believe on Him. So we are not surprised to find that Jesus says things about believing. Three things that are taught about believing.

- The first thing about believing, is that you can't believe in Christ **just when you please**. Here is Christ's last warning and tender appeal to the Jewish Nation: Verses 35 & 36 ³⁵ *So Jesus said to them, "The light is among you for a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you. The one who walks in the darkness does not know where he is going. ³⁶ While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light."*
"I'm the 'light of the world' ", says Jesus, "I'm only here for a little while. If you make any journey or go anywhere you must do it while the light shines, because the light wont always shine. Darkness is coming. While you have light; believe in the light; that you may be the children of light." Our Lord speaks to those who hear: that they have the opportunity to believe. But this opportunity to believe is not an endless 'open ended' opportunity.

This applies to anybody! Scripture makes it clear that we can only believe in this life. There is no second chance.

But Scripture also makes it clear, that there are some people whom God gives up. He speaks to them and they say, "No". Again and again. Each time they say "No", their judgement of spiritual things becomes more and more hardened. Their mind becomes hideous and ugly against God, by their constant rejecting of the Word of God, until eventually God has nothing to say to them, since they, by their own choice, are adamant in their animosity and hate of spiritual things. So each time you hear the Gospel, you're less likely to receive it the next time!
Walk while you have the light, ... ³⁶ While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light."

- The next thing Jesus says about believing is that: **believing means 'losing out' and yet not 'losing out' at all!**
Verses 42 & 43: Which shows that believing in Christ is an unpopular thing. ⁴² *Nevertheless, many even of the authorities believed in him, but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it, so that they would not be put out of the synagogue;* ⁴³ *for they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God.*
If anybody believed in Christ they were immediately excommunicated from the Jewish religion. Meaning that they lost a deal of civil privileges as well.⁵ They

⁵ While under Roman conquest, the Jews still had certain amount of autonomy in religious matters. Much of their civil framework was based on the Biblical Laws. In particular the 'religious state' took care of social services. The care of the orphans, widows and the infirm was vested in the family and the community. There was no secular 'social security'. All 'welfare' was Temple based and funded. The notion of 'tithing' was necessary to provide the funding. To be excommunicated from the temple meant no

certainly lost the love and fellowship of their family. Being ostracised and cut off. Desperate situation to be in!

Believing in Christ has never been popular! The prospect for non-Christians, particularly young students, if they come into the fellowship of Christ, having believed in Him, having repented of their sin and having begun to follow Him, they find that many of their close friends will never be close again. Others who may be well respected in their original circle of acquaintances and friends, when they are converted lose this respect and friendship. They will! Not justifiably, but it will happen. Families will also be divided. Once loving and considerate and gentle they will sometimes become wild and inconsiderate and irrational, when you come to believe in Christ.

This is what is meant by verse 25. It's to this situation which Jesus speaks:
²⁵ *Whoever loves his life loses it, (You say to yourself, "I can't afford to lose the love and favour of my family, therefore I won't believe in Christ: By loving life you'll actually be losing life.⁶) and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.*

You must say, "However much I may lose out, still, I must go the way of Christ – eternal life depends on this!" You will keep it. That's the way to everlasting life.

Verse 26: Christ continues – saying: ²⁶ *If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honour him.*

By going Christ's way you lose the honour of the world, but the Father will honour you! By following the Lord Jesus Christ you will seem to lose out. But where He is there you will be also. So much more to gain!

welfare 'safety net'.

⁶ Remember the even more explicit reference to holding on to family to the exclusion of Christ at Luke 14:26.

- The third thing Jesus said about believing is in verse s 44 – 46. **To believe on Him is not to believe on Him**, but to believe on Him who sent Him.⁷ This of course relates to the mystery of the God-head!

There is one God almighty and yet there are Three that are God! (There are NOT three gods.) The Father is God; the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son, is God; the Holy Spirit is God.

When you 'come' to the Son – you 'come' to the Son because the Holy Spirit has worked in your life. When you 'come' to the Son you come to the Father. So that when you embrace the Saviour, you embrace the whole God-head. When you know Christ you walk with God. That's the great privilege of believing. That you are now in fellowship with heaven, through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Who in a few chapters (John 14:6) will announce Himself as: “... *the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*”

So we have seen over these 2 weeks: 3 views of Christ; He's told us three things about His death; and three things about believing. But not everybody is going to believe – the High Priest didn't, nor the Pharisees nor Scribes. Most people didn't and don't. So we hear, before the chapter closes, three things about rejecting Christ through unbelief.

- First of all: **Unbelief – it is common.**

Rejecting Christ is common. You turn away from Jesus Christ; renounce His claims and fail to submit to His Lordship, you are doing a common thing. It's what most people do.

Though He has done so many miracles before them, yet they didn't believe on Him. (verse 37)

Isaiah had said over 700 years before: “*Lord, who has believed what he heard from us, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?*” (verse 38)

Unbelief has always been common in the world.

Right from the Garden of Eden, when the Devil said, “Did God really say, ...? ” (Genesis 3:1) Unbelief has always been the dominant religion.

People going through life with: 'blinded eyes and harden hearts' (Verse 40) who don't see and don't understand and who are not converted and never healed. It's common!

Sometimes a unconverted person, sitting in a church, amongst a group of Christians, feels that he is in the minority – but he isn't. Once we disperse and are in the 'world' – tomorrow – we find that believers are in the minority.

Unbelief is common. Even when and where the Gospel is preached: unbelief is common. Even among those who know it best: unbelief is common. They may agree that the 'facts' are true (as does the devil and his angels – who as a consequence shudder.⁸ James2:19) but they know nothing of a personal

⁷ ⁴⁴ And Jesus cried out and said, “Whoever believes in me, believes not in me but in him who sent me. ⁴⁵ And whoever sees me sees him who sent me. ⁴⁶ I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness.

⁸ It is true that the devil “believes” in God—that is, he believes God exists. But this is a far cry from the kind of faith we are called to

embrace of Jesus Christ. A personal peace with God. The personal assurance that their sins – even theirs – are forgiven. The personal knowledge of God as Father.

They don't 'know' that. They may know the 'facts', but they don't 'know' that.

- Secondly, **Unbelief is damnable!** Verse 47: ⁴⁷ *If anyone hears my words and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world.*

What tender words, from our Lord. “You don't believe, yet I do not stand in judgement of you.” He said to His original hearers. “I haven't come to be the judge. I've come to be the Saviour.” But He is coming to be the judge (perhaps soon) and when He comes to be the judge He won't be the witness against you. (It would not be just for the judge to also be the witness.) But the counsel for the prosecution will be the Words that He has spoken and left behind.

At that great judgement seat: look at verse 48. ⁴⁸ *The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day.*

At this last judgement the Lord of Glory sits on the throne and the witness for the prosecution is none other than the Words He has left behind in the world. That book! Perhaps covered in dust in some homes. That book! Which has been quoted – not so very long ago – as the most often purchased. But equally least read!

Often despised and ridiculed. Whole pages and chapters torn out of the mind of many readers and academics, labelled as myths and quaint fictional stories.

Beware! Christ makes claim to being the author of it all. All of it. The prophets wrote under the inspiration of the Spirit of Christ. Noah's preaching and Moses' writing. Moses only wrote because he saw Christ's Spirit. The Apostles only wrote because they were commissioned to the work and were prompted and reminded, after Pentecost, by the Spirit as Christ promised later in this Gospel. (John 14:28)

There is the Word. Everything that God demands of you and expects you to know is in the Word. And at the last day that word is what condemns. And the Word contains the message that will save you. But if you reject Him and fail to receive His words, then those very words are what will speak against you. The prosecution, will rest the case, which will be damnable.

- Thirdly and finally, **unbelief is Godless.** (verses 49 & 50)
Jesus tells His hearers as He speaks, He doesn't speak of Himself. He speaks

have. To truly believe in God means to trust Him—in other words, we not only believe He exists, but we actually commit our lives to Him and trust Him to save us through Jesus Christ.

Yes, the devil believes God exists—in fact, he has no doubts about it. But he doesn't trust God to save him; instead, he has set himself up in opposition to God and wants nothing to do with him. He also knows that some day the final battle will be fought and that God alone will be victorious. That is why the Bible says, “Even the demons believe that—and shudder” (James 2:19). Satan will not win!

The Bible says, “without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him” (Hebrews 11:6). Don't be content with a shallow belief, but by faith commit your life to Christ and trust Him alone for your salvation. Billy Graham

because the Father sent Him. The words that He speaks are the words the Father commanded He should speak. The words the Father gave Him are words of everlasting life. ⁵⁰ ... *What I say, therefore, I say as the Father has told me.*” Nobody then or now is to think that to turn away Jesus Christ is just to reject one more religious teacher from the East. This is the divine Son of God in the World who was and is speaking. Not a word falls from His lips without the express authority of the whole God-head. The words, Jesus speaks are the words of the God-head. To reject them is to reject the words of God.

He Himself is Yahweh. We saw that expressed at the beginning of the chapter. What He speaks is in perfect harmony with the Holy Trinity. It is Godless therefore to reject Him.

So in this Chapter the Lord Jesus Christ stands in the world. It's clear who He is. It's clear from the prophets who predicted His coming. It's clear from the wonderful words which He speaks. It's clear from the miracles which He performed, like the raising of Lazarus. It's clear from His own prediction. Such as the prediction of His cross – His being 'lifted up'.

A week later – only a week, after speaking these words, they went to His tomb and it was empty, the grave clothes undisturbed. The Lord is seen. All who saw Him changed. It's clear who He is.

How do you see Him this morning?

- Do you see Him as an enemy. Get Him out of your life as quickly as possible.
- A celebrity – someone just to be admired, or
- A friend – to sit down for a meal with.

How do you view His Cross?

That 'lifting up' of the Son of God. Can you see it now as something planned; something accomplishing something.

Do you believe on this Son of God. Do you know anything of that strong attractive power of the Cross. The Yahweh of Hosts, nailed to a tree.

Did it for you, a sinner. That's the price that sin demands because of the way you have lived and are living. That Cross meant: that was the punishment demanded. He did it! The Father sent Him to do it.

And now the opportunity. The opportunity to 'come to the light' and to believe on the 'light', to become a child of the 'light', to enjoy the 'light'.

Take the opportunity? Or say, “Not just yet.” After all to take the opportunity is to 'lose out' yet not to 'lose out' actually. Rather to gain ever so much more, – to believe on Him is to know God.

Do you reject Him? As do most! Then if that is your final decision (and remember that each time you fail to accept makes each new chance less and less likely as your heart hardens and hardens – like clay under the glare of the Sun.) But if to reject become

your final decision, judgement is then certain. The Book that we opened today, is the book that will speak against you at the last day. While you are without Christ you are without God. As long as you remain like that you are without hope in this world and the next.

Yet the believer in Christ doesn't know anything of that despair. You look at Yahweh on the Cross and know that He died for you and therefore your sin really is dealt with. You know what 'peace with heaven' is. You know yourself to be the richest person in the world.

All those people around you without your privileges 'in Christ'. With their non-pardoned sin and not knowing God's peace, are ignorant of their parlous state. The eternal peril they are in. Yet they think they are doing just fine and you're the foolish one.

Only the judgement seat, and the eternity which follows it, will show how poor are: Christ's enemies; His mere admirers; and all those who have never believed. How poor are those who have never become, through Christ, friends of God.

[2421]

May all the saints gathered here today, show what it means to be 'friends of God'.

Next week we will have a 'lightning' review of the first 12 Chapters of John's Gospel and a preview of all the Chapters to come.

Delivered Sunday 28th January 2018

Usual sermon replaced by BIBLE PROJECT video of Gospel of JOHN