

Series: **Power and Passion of Jesus** – week 1

CDOBC – beginning on 3/26/17

Today's Title: "**Rejection of Jesus**"

March 26, 2017 - John 12:37-50

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OBJECTIVE: To help people see the passion and appeal of Jesus in the last week of His life.

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### *Opening Prayer*

Cleaning up a 'loose end' - Please take out the insert in your bulletin titled: Serving Opportunities.

A few weeks ago in my sermon titled: "Committed to Serve", I must not have made it clear that my desire was for those of you not already serving at capacity, for you to put your name in one of the blanks - and turn this in to the church office / connection table / offering plate, etc.

Today I'm beginning a series - the "***Power & Passion of Jesus***" which will take us through the Easter Season.

I want us to build up to Easter - and to do so - I want us to look at the last week of Jesus' life.

Our son, Brian, is finishing his sophomore year at GCU. I can remember as we were preparing for his freshman year to bring him up to college, as a parent you think of some final things to say / repeat / emphasize as he is about to take this next step of challenge, freedom and responsibility in his life. Our daughter, Jessica, is about to graduate H.S. and she will attend the U of A in the Fall - and we are in the same process with her - what are some things to say / repeat / emphasize as

she is about to take the next step of challenge, freedom and responsibility in her life.

As a parent - you realize if you haven't said it already, it's too late to begin now. But to remind / repeat and emphasize is a wise thing to do.

As Jesus was in the last week before the cross - to a similar degree, I'm sure He thought of what to say / what to emphasize / what to repeat?

Turn in your Bible to **John 12**.

In the chapters leading up to **John 12**, the events around Jesus' life have been nothing but headlines.

In **John 9** Jesus heals a man who was blind from birth (vs. 1) and the enemies of Jesus, the religious leaders, were insistent on proving this miracle false - or trying to find some other way to incriminate Jesus. They questioned the man's parents to see if he was indeed born blind, they questioned the man 2x - and at the second questioning of the healed man, he seems to be unaware of the hatred the leaders had for Jesus - and John records this exchange:

**vs. 26-27**

“They said to him, “What did He do to you? How did He open your eyes?”

**27** He answered them, “I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become His disciples?”

This did not go over well.

In **John 10**, the religious leaders were fed up with Jesus - and “Many of them said, ‘He is demon-possessed and raving mad.’” (vs. 20) Later in chapter 10, they pick up stones to stone Jesus, but Jesus escapes.

In **John 11** Jesus’ good friend Lazarus dies. Four days later, Jesus arrives in Bethany, the town Lazarus and his sisters Mary and Martha lived, and He raises Lazarus from the dead. This amazing miracle which proves Jesus has power over death itself - enrages the religious leaders and they now plot to kill Him (vs. 53).

Because of this, Jesus was now a wanted man - on the ‘most-wanted list’ - according to the religious leaders He was ‘public enemy #1’, so Jesus and His disciples laid low and stayed in the town of Ephraim, about 15 miles north of Jerusalem.

Passover - the largest Jewish celebration was only a few weeks away. The population of Jerusalem would swell as many Jews from all over the world would travel there to celebrate God’s deliverance of His people.

Little did anyone know this Passover would be the greatest of all - as God would indeed save His people - but this time the sacrifice would not be a mere lamb, but the sinless Lamb of God - the one and only Savior who would make atonement for the sins of humanity for all time.

In John 12, Jesus arrives in Bethany (2 miles from Jerusalem) and a thank-you dinner is given in His honor. The dinner is held in the home of a man named Simon, who Jesus healed of leprosy.

Lazarus was there - about 2 weeks resurrected.

His sisters were there - Martha was hosting and preparing the meal, while Mary helped some.

Jesus and His disciples were there.

What a night it must have been.

Passover was 6 days away.

Mary anoints Jesus's feet (vs. 3) and Judas complains about it being a waste of money (vs. 4).

As the evening went on, a large crowd gathered not only to see Jesus, but to see Lazarus as well.

Lazarus was walking, breathing evidence of Jesus' power - and people were coming to faith in Jesus because of the evidence before them in the person of Lazarus.

Instead of accepting the evidence, the religious leaders planned to kill Lazarus along with Jesus - to get rid of the evidence.

Even though Jesus was a wanted man and the religious leaders were waiting for the right moment to arrest Him in order to kill Him, John tells us the "next day" Jesus makes His triumphal entry into Jerusalem as no doubt thousands of

people lined the road and praised Him as the long-awaited Messiah.

Jesus had clearly demonstrated He was the Messiah by the miraculous signs He had performed, and many were believing in Him as a military and political leader.

They were taught the O.T. passages which speak of the Messiah as reigning forever, ruling over the enemies of Israel - and they were celebrating Jesus because they thought He was going to defeat the Roman's and restore Israel's independence and power once again.

But Jesus rode a donkey on the road to Jerusalem that day - not a mighty horse!

A donkey was a symbol of peace - not of victory or of might. Jesus didn't rally the people to join His cause against Rome - He spoke to them about His death and told them He would be "lifted up" (vs. 32), which they clearly understood as a reference to crucifixion.

This was not what they wanted. They wanted a political Messiah - a Messiah who would fight the Romans - and the result was many did not believe in Him.

*Read 12:37*

**Rejecting Jesus is not due to a lack of evidence.** vs. 37

Have you been rejecting Jesus? Those who reject Jesus don't reject Him due to a lack of evidence. They reject

Jesus because they want Jesus on their terms. They want a Jesus which meets their ideals.

Notice what John says (NIV): “they still would not believe in Him.”

- Despite turning water to wine...
- Healing the royal official’s son in Capernaum...
- Healing the paralyzed man by the pool of Bethesda...
- Feeding the 5,000...
- Walking on water...
- Healing the man born blind...
- Raising Lazarus from the dead.

Despite all this evidence - and all His teaching - “they would not believe in Him.”

“would not” becomes “could not” and if you are “unwilling” eventually you will be “unable”.

Their lack of belief was a matter of their will - not a shortcoming of the evidence.

Like so many people today, they rejected Jesus - because they wanted a different version of Jesus.

They didn’t want a Jesus who taught:

“Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves Me must follow Me, and where I am, My servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves Me.” (vs. 25-26)

Where do you stand? Have you accepted Jesus and placed your faith in Him - or have you rejected Him despite the evidence of history?

The puritan preacher John Murray said, *“If God’s Word does not quicken your spirit, it will deaden your spirit.”*

Of course, the evidence of history doesn’t answer every single question. I still have questions - I still wonder about certain things - there are always going to be some questions we can never answer in this life.

The evidence for Jesus is there. People over the past 2,000 years have concluded the evidence is sufficient - the only thing left is your heart.

**Rejecting Christ prevents future belief.** vs. 38-41, 47-48

*Read vs. 38-41; 47-48*

Nobody will ever have a good excuse for not believing in Christ.

In **Romans 1:18-20**, the Apostle Paul says people by their... “unrighteousness suppress the truth.

**19** For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them.

**20** For His invisible attributes, namely, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.”

A lack of faith / belief is due to a person’s refusal to accept the evidence before them. God has given us ample evidence in creation - and in the person of Christ - and in our own conscience. But the love of sin causes people to reject the evidence and reject the truth of God.

We see this in various areas of life - *politicians* make the most outrageous statements even though the evidence clearly contradicts their view.

*Criminals* and their family routinely claim innocence, as the evidence points to their guilt.

*Entertainers* make outrageous claims and statements about certain issues - even though the evidence is clearly against them.

*Case and point: NBA stars Kyrie Irving and Shaquille O'Neil recent public statements they believe the earth is flat.*

(<http://www.cbssports.com/nba/news/kyrie-irving-says-the-earth-is-undeniably-flat-this-is-not-even-a-conspiracy-theory/> - <http://bleacherreport.com/articles/2699262-shaqs-flat-earth-jokes-are-no-laughing-matter-for-scientists>)

How does this happen? How and why do people ignore and reject evidence about Christ - about the reality of God? Sin darkens their mind, causing them to have an inability to understand spiritual truths.

“The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.” (1 Cor. 2:14)

When this happens, God allows their sin to run it's course in their life - and we see in **Romans 1:24:**

24 Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves,

26 For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions.

28 And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done.”

Rejection of Christ is an issue of sin and rebellion against God - not an issue of a lack of evidence.



When you reject Christ, your sin and rejection may blind you to spiritual truth, and at some point God will give you up to your sin and this prevents future belief.

There is certainly a mystery here. God has elected / chosen those whom He will save. But the responsibility for choosing falls on each person.

God is perfectly just, righteous and holy - He cannot do wrong - He cannot be unfair - He cannot make mistakes. So, in the mysterious part of this process, we can never blame God for someone's lack of faith and their rejection of Christ.

In his commentary, Leon Morris says: *“John...does not mean that the blinding takes place without the will or against the will of these people...the hand of God is in the consequences of their choice...”* (The New International Commentary on the

New Testament, The Gospel According to John, Revised, by Leon Morris, p. 537)

The responsibility falls on each person to respond to the Gospel when they hear it!

*“If you hear God's Word, don't hesitate to respond. What you are now unwilling to do, one day you will be unable to do.”* Alistair Begg

“Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.” (2 Cor. 6:2)

Don't wait! When you hear the Gospel, respond to it - because there is no guarantee that you will be able to respond the next time you hear it!

**Secret faith is dangerous and it makes no *impact* vs. 42-43**

Do you hide your faith because you're concerned about the opinion of others?

***Read vs. 42-43***

Secret faith is dangerous because of the uncertainty and confusion it produces. Secret faith will cause you to question the sincerity of your faith and you will lack assurance because your life will never demonstrate the fruit of your faith. Second, it has no evangelistic power. Third, other people are hurt because you are hiding the most blessed thing in your life - and the most blessed thing you can offer others. In our text, Jesus was certainly hurt due to the secret faith of these leaders - and the Jewish people were hurt because their spiritual leaders kept the greatest spiritual truth from them!

There is much debate in the commentaries which tries to answer if these men were really saved. It's very easy to be critical of them and lose sight of the tremendous persecution they would have endured if they went public. Also, let's remind ourselves that the faith of these men was infantile. ***At the very most*** a few of them could have been secret believers in Jesus for three years. Most likely, they believed in Jesus much less than three years. Counted among this group is likely Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus. We know that upon Jesus'

death, both men became public with their faith in Jesus as they asked for Jesus' body to give it a proper burial. Don't be quick and eager to judge the validity of someone's faith.

We need to heed passages which call us to publicly acknowledge our faith in Christ.

**Romans 10:9-10**

"...if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

**10** For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved."

Those who were baptized today were publicly declaring their faith in Jesus.

But this passage and others like it need to be held in tension by ongoing work of God in their life.

When someone comes to faith, they are an infant in Christ - not yet strong or aware of all Christ calls us to do in life. Paul also writes in **Philippians 1:6** that:

"...He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ."

"...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling..."

**(Philippians 2:12)**

In the same way that He is sovereign in matters of belief, He is also sovereign in matters of Christian growth and maturity.

But know this: faith is not meant to be secret.

Don't keep your faith secret. Declare your faith in Christ not just by your deeds, but by sharing it with others!

### **The deity of Jesus** vs. 44-45

**Read vs. 44-45**

You can't say that you believe in God, and at the same time reject Jesus!

It's popular in our culture today for many people to claim the God of Islam and the God of the Bible is the same God. Any beginning theological student knows this is a ridiculous belief.

Jesus is making a very clear and direct claim in these verses. This is the claim: *I and the Father are one and the same.*

This truth is all throughout John's Gospel:

**John 1:1** "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

**John 1:34** (John the Baptizer speaking of Jesus) "And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God."

**John 1:49** (Nathaniel's testimony about Jesus) "Rabbi, you are the Son of God!"

**The 7 "I AM" statements in John which are claims of deity by Jesus.**

**John 10:38** "...that you may know and understand that the Father is in Me and I am in the Father."

**John 11:27** She said to Him, "Yes, Lord; I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world."

**John 20:31** (Purpose of the Gospel of John) “...but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name.”

Belief in Jesus = belief in God

You can't say that you believe in God, yet don't believe in Jesus!

(vs. 44) John tells us “Jesus cried out” - He said this in a very loud voice - He wants to make sure His disciples and anyone else listening hears what He's saying.

Belief in Jesus was also belief in God the Father.

Seeing Jesus is seeing God.

In vs. 46, Jesus says He has, “come into the world as light...”

In the letters John wrote, in **1 John 1:5** he said:

“...God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all.”

This is why you can't separate belief in God from belief in Jesus - Jesus is light...God is light.

Jesus, being the 2<sup>nd</sup> person of the eternal Triune God, became flesh - in which “...all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell...” (Col. 1:19) so He might reveal God to the world and to redeem the world as He gave His life as atonement for the sins of the world.

**Jesus's final appeal: light and eternal life** vs. 46-50

**Read vs. 46-50**

Jesus' 1<sup>st</sup> advent was to save - not to judge.

His 2<sup>nd</sup> advent will be to judge.

But when Jesus took on flesh and ministered - healed - taught - He came to seek and to save the lost.

Religion causes many to judge - to become critical of their fellow-human beings.

Christ came to save and offer grace and forgiveness.

Jesus came to take us out of darkness and into the light of God's grace, truth and goodness.

**Colossians 1:13**

“He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son,

14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.”

The last words of Jesus' public ministry.

vs. 27 - “Now My soul is troubled...”

His last words were an offer of eternal life!

### **Apply it...**

The passion of Jesus was to save sinners and He had the power to do it - proven through the miraculous signs - the final sign being raising Lazarus from the dead.

Nobody is too sinful for Jesus to save them.

Don't delay - don't wait - don't put it off to tomorrow.

“today is the day of your salvation.” (2 Cor. 6:2) A-B-C

Christian...do you have a passion for Christ? Do you live in His power each day?

Close in prayer