

# Why Jesus came into the world

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Now, our Bible reading today is taken from John's Gospel, Chapter 12. This is the last in a short series from that chapter.

And you'll find this in our Visitor's Bibles on page 899, page 899. I'm reading John 12, verses 44 to 50.

And our title this afternoon is Why Jesus Came Into the World. Now, I'll read the passage out loud in just a moment. But I wanted to say a little bit, first of all, to introduce it so that it will make a little more sense when I come to read it.

John's Gospel falls into two main sections, two main parts, plus a one-chapter epilogue at the end. The first main part is chapters 1 to 12.

And in those chapters, the evangelist John records the events of Jesus' three years of public ministry, including the seven great signs or miracles that he performed. Then the second main part is chapters 13 to 20.

[ 1 : 0 3 ] And those chapters deal with the events of Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter Saturday, and Easter Sunday, just four days. The epilogue, chapter 21, records an episode that happened perhaps two or three weeks after the resurrection of Jesus.

So the first 12 chapters are dealing with three years in the life of Jesus. We then have eight chapters dealing with four days in his life, which you might say are the most important four days in the history of the world.

And then we have an epilogue at the very end. So the passage that I'm about to read here, chapter 12, verses 44 to 50, is the final section of the first part of John's Gospel.

And you'll see from verse 44 that John doesn't give any indication of place or time or date. Now, in all the previous chapters, John has told us where the various events occurred and when.

In Galilee or Samaria or Jerusalem or some other place. But in these final verses of chapter 12, there are no pointers to time or location. So it seems that John, the evangelist, wants us to understand that in these final verses of the chapter, he is summarizing the core elements of Jesus' teaching and preaching.

[ 2 : 1 9 ] This is, you might say, the heart of the gospel. This is the announcement that Jesus made to the world back then in 30 AD. And it is still the announcement that he makes to the world today.

You could read the whole of Shakespeare with all his subtle understanding and his beautiful words and wisdom. And yet you wouldn't find anything in the whole of Shakespeare to match the truth or the urgent significance of these few sentences.

So let me read them. Chapter 12, verse 44. And Jesus cried out and said, Whoever believes in me, believes not in me, but in him who sent me.

And whoever sees me, sees him who sent me. I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness.

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. The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge.

[ 3 : 28 ] The word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day. For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment, what to say and what to speak.

And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I say, therefore, I say as the Father has told me.

Now, the heart of John's gospel is an invitation, or more accurately, a command or a summons to believe in Jesus Christ.

And when you stop to think about it, believing in Jesus really means two things. It's to do with the mind and the heart. To believe in Jesus means that the mind agrees and the heart submits.

So the mind of the Christian comes to agree, comes to accept that Jesus is the Christ and the Son of God. And the heart comes to submit to him gladly as Lord and Master.

[ 4 : 32 ] Intellectual agreement and heart submission combine. And the person who becomes a Christian then serves the Lord with great joy and is willing to stake his future on Jesus, both in this life and in eternity.

There is nothing more radical than to become a Christian. And once you've become a Christian, there is nothing more radical than to live as a Christian. And when in verse 44 here, Jesus cries out to the whole world, whoever believes in me, it's this combination of intellectual agreement and heart submission that he's talking about.

And what he says in the next few verses tells us a great deal about what it means to believe in Jesus. So let me try and bring out his main points. I've got three.

First, he is saying that to believe in him is to believe in God the Father. That's what verse 44 is all about.

He cried out, whoever believes in me believes not in me, but in him who sent me. Now, the one who sent him is, of course, God the Father. So Jesus is asserting that his identity and the identity of God the Father are so closely bound up together that to believe in the Son inevitably entails believing in the Father.

[ 5 : 50 ] You cannot have one without the other. Now, doesn't that answer an important contemporary question? You imagine a young adult of today, somebody full of intellectual curiosity, who begins to study the religions of the world, wanting to find out the truth about God.

And he or she says how interesting all these religions are. They're deeply tied up with ancient and fascinating civilizations.

And they give such varied and differing accounts of what the deity is like. As we look at the religions, we find monotheism, one God.

Polytheism, many gods. Pantheism, God is in everything. We have the veneration of ancestors, the veneration of animals, the veneration of stars and planets. We even have atheistic religions like Buddhism.

So where does one begin? How can a modern student like me begin to search for the true God? These religions can't all be true because they say such contradictory things about God.

[ 6 : 55 ] So perhaps I'll go journeying and exploring the world on my search for the real God. I'll visit the Buddhist monasteries in Tibet or Burma. I'll go to China and discuss Confucius with Chinese scholars.

I'll visit the river Ganges and observe the rituals and the rites of Hinduism. I'll go to Mecca, if I can get in there, and I'll study Islam. I'll go to the great cathedrals of Europe and Britain and contemplate their vaulted Gothic arches and pray for a revelation of the divine.

Now, you could spend 10 years of your life, 20 years of your life, running around the world like that and still end up none the wiser. And I guess a lot of modern people, though they don't go to that sort of effort, are a bit like that inside their heads.

They're forever restless until their minds come to rest in a verse like verse 44. The one who believes in Jesus inevitably comes to believe in God the Father, the true God, because Jesus exactly represents him.

So to know Jesus is to know the true and only God. And the same point is being made in verse 45 as well. And whoever sees me sees him who sent me.

[ 8 : 10 ] To see Jesus is to see God the Father. Now, obviously today we can't see him with our natural eyes in the way that we see each other or in the way that his original hearers could see him.

But we're at no disadvantage for that reason. We can be confident that Jesus looked like any other young Jewish man. He would have had the dark hair and coloring and features of the typical Jew.

What's important for us is not to know exactly what he looked like, but to know a great deal about him, to come to know about him from the pages of the Bible. And the whole Bible speaks of him, right from Genesis to Revelation.

Though, of course, the four Gospels speak particularly of him and record his story. And these pages convey to us a great deal about his character and his ways. So we see, for example, his truthfulness, his honesty, his love, his unerring judgment of character, his hatred of hypocrisy and false religion.

And we listen to the extraordinary teaching of Jesus, which Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John have gathered together in the form of sermons and shorter sayings. And as we read and ponder these Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, we begin to get to know Jesus, this matchless, incomparable person.

[ 9 : 28 ] And then we discover from a passage like this one that we're reading today, that to see him and to know him is to see and know what God the Father is like.

The point is, like Father, like Son. To get to know the character and reality of the true and only God, we haven't got to go off to Tibet or Beijing or Mecca.

We only have to open our Bibles in Glasgow and think carefully and unhurriedly about Jesus. And we shall come to know the true God as he really is.

To believe in Jesus is to believe in the one who sent him. To see Jesus is to see the one who sent him. And to listen to Jesus is to listen also to God the Father.

Look on to verse 50. What I say, therefore, I say as the Father has told me. So Jesus is claiming no originality for his teaching.

[ 10 : 28 ] His claim there in verse 50 is that his teaching is a perfect reproduction and representation of God the Father's words. So, friends, don't go to Tibet.

Unless, of course, you want to climb Mount Everest. I wouldn't do it even then. Don't go there. You don't need to go there to find the true God. You will find him as you discover Jesus in the pages of the four Gospels.

So there's the first thing. To believe in Jesus is to believe in God the Father. Now, secondly, we're looking at verse 46 here. To believe in Jesus is to live in the light.

46. I have come into the world as light so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness. And let me point out a very interesting feature of that verse.

This verse is one of 10 or 12. I haven't counted them accurately, but there are 10 or 12 verses in the New Testament which tell us why Jesus came into the world. They're all different from each other.

[ 11 : 31 ] Some of them come from the mouth of Jesus himself, like this one. Or like his saying in John 10.10, I have come that people may have life and have it abundantly. Or his saying in Luke 19 at the end of the Zacchaeus story where he says the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.

So some come from his mouth. Other ones come from the pens of the apostles. So Paul writes in 1 Timothy chapter 1, Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

John says in his first letter, chapter 3, the reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the work of the devil. You could have a very profitable Bible study getting together those verses that describe why Jesus came into the world.

Now let's look at this one here in verse 46. There is an unmistakable implication here, and that is that all people are by birth and by nature in darkness.

I've come into the world as light so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness. That's where we start. It's the darkness of sin and death and moral rottenness.

[ 12 : 44 ] Now isn't it true that right from our youngest days, all of us have known how to misbehave? Nobody had to teach you how to tell a lie, did they? You knew how to do it from a very early age.

Nobody had to teach me how to steal. So for example, when I was six years old, I stole a shiny, beautiful little key fob. It had the name Renault, the French car company Renault written on it, and there was a little enamel piece in the center of this leather fob.

It was beautiful. It belonged to my school friend, whose name was Miles Davis. I don't think I ever gave it back to him. I just felt so guilty and so ashamed of myself.

Miles, if you're out there in cyberspace listening to this talk, it was me, Edward Lobb. Please forgive me. Now friends, we're all like that. As I say that, you'll think of things that you did when you were a child and other things that you've done since, and I think of things I've done since, and much worse things than that.

We're all by nature in the darkness. That's where we start. Our parents spent 20 years trying to teach us how to behave well. They didn't have to spend five minutes teaching us to misbehave.

[ 13 : 57 ] So the darkness is our native and repulsive element, and it's made up of things like greed, envy, pride, lust, vanity, self-centeredness, anger, violence, lying, and a number of other things.

We're sinners by nature, all of us, and the wages of sin, says the Bible, is death. It's what we deserve. But the good news here in verse 46 is that Jesus has come into the world as light so as to rescue us from the tyranny of our darkness and from the ultimate destiny of those who remain in darkness, which is, of course, hell.

So to believe in Jesus is to live in the light. Now what does that really mean? Well, Jesus puts it a bit more fully at the start of the eighth chapter of John's Gospel.

You'll probably know these words, but he says there, I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.

So it's to do with not falling over because you can't see where you're going. Think of it like this. Imagine it's nighttime in your own house, and you walk into a dark room, and as soon as you walk into the dark room, you switch on the light so as to see what's going on in the room.

[ 15 : 17 ] The light coming on enables you to do whatever you need to do, to find a book or to make a phone call or write a birthday card or whatever. You can do these activities confidently and quickly because the light enables you to see everything.

But if you walk into a dark room and the light is not working, you switch the switch and nothing happens, you're at a great disadvantage. You're rather like a blind person. You're likely to fall over a chair or fall over the dog, which has gone in there to have a quiet sleep and get away from people.

So the turning on of the light enables you to see clearly so that you can then act confidently and appropriately. And what Jesus means in our verse 46 is that when we trust in him, it's as though a great light begins to shine on the road that we're walking along.

We begin to see our way clearly so that we can act confidently and appropriately. We begin to see where the obstacles and dangers and difficulties lie, the things that need to be avoided.

Because light is now shining on our pathway, we begin to be able to distinguish things that are good and true from things that are false and deceitful. We begin to leave behind moral blindness, and we become increasingly morally sighted.

[ 16 : 36 ] Now, it doesn't all happen immediately. You might say the dawn creeps rather slowly over the land. But when we've been on this road of trusting Christ for some time, we discover the joy of being able to see clearly where we're walking.

The moral confusion and despair and muddle in which we once lived is driven away. It's one of the great joys of being a Christian. We no longer remain in darkness.

So to believe in Jesus is first to believe in God the Father and to come to know the true God, and secondly, to live in the light. Now, we're coming to the third thing in just a moment.

But before we do, Jesus interjects a sharp and sobering message to the person who is listening to him, but is inclined to dismiss his message.

Just imagine the kind of person who might have been standing in the crowd there in Jerusalem, back in those days, listening to Jesus, and perhaps beginning to be drawn to Jesus.

[ 17 : 38 ] But in this person's thinking, he suddenly pauses, and he begins to weigh everything up. And maybe he says to himself, I'm realizing that if I follow Jesus, I'm going to have to repent of various things that I would rather not have to repent of.

So, for example, I'm going to have to start being honest with Her Majesty's revenue and customs. And that's going to reduce my income, which is small enough as it is. And that's going to be a sharp difficulty.

And I'm going to have to stop flirting with the pretty girl who works close to me in the office. And I'm not sure that I really want to stop flirting with her. And maybe he thinks of half a dozen other things that are going to have to change.

And so, although he's drawn to Jesus, he then says, I can't do it. It's too demanding for me. I won't do it. I'm going to drop this scheme of following Jesus. I'll invent some excuse and slip away.

Now, it's to that kind of person that Jesus speaks in verse 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.

[ 18 : 49 ] The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge. The word that I've spoken, the message that I've spoken, will judge him on the last day.

In other words, on the last day, the day of judgment, God the Father will say to this man, did you not hear the message of Jesus? And the man will say, I did hear it.

And God will say, why then did you not believe it? And the man will say, because I didn't want to give up fraudulent accounting, and I wanted that girl.

And God will say, you rejected Jesus and his glorious message for those shameful reasons. And the man will say, yes, I did. And God will reply, it's the message of Jesus that stands witness and judge against you this day.

Now, if anybody here is in the position of that man, hearing the message, but wanting to reject it because it demands repentance and change, be warned and be wise.

[ 19 : 57 ] Why choose death when life is within your grasp? Now, this brings us straight to the final thing that the Lord Jesus holds out to the believer, and that is eternal life itself.

Look with me at verse 49. For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment, what to say and what to speak.

And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I say, therefore, I say as the Father has told me. Now, isn't that a striking way of Jesus ending his public ministry?

He is disclaiming any idea that his teaching originates in himself. There's a remarkable humility in him. What I say, he says, is what the Father has told me to say.

It's not my message, it's his message. But let's notice as we close a remarkable word that Jesus uses in verse 49 and again in verse 50, and it's the word commandment.

[ 21 : 02 ] The Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment. He has commanded me what to say and what to speak. So, what is this commandment?

Verse 50, eternal life. Now, it's so unexpected that he should call it a commandment. You might expect him to say, it's an offer.

I'm offering you eternal life. Or you might expect him to say, it's a promise. I'm promising you eternal life. Or even, I'm holding out the prospect of eternal life to you. But he says instead, eternal life is the commandment of God the Father to everyone who has ears to hear.

God loves each one of us so much that he commands us not to perish, but to receive eternal life by putting our trust in his son Jesus.

And this involves the agreement of the mind and the submission of the heart. His commandment, says the Lord Jesus, is eternal life.

[ 22 : 09 ] Let's bow our heads and thank him. Dear God, our Father, we think of that great final day, the day of judgment, that our Lord Jesus speaks about in these words.

and our prayer is that there should be no person who is here this afternoon who should have to be judged by the gospel message because he or she has refused it.

We thank you so much, dear Heavenly Father, that you not only offer us eternal life, but command it to us and command us to repent because you love us so much and because your desire is that we should share eternal life in heaven, in the new creation, with you.

So please, dear God, our Father, have mercy upon our hearts and our minds. Help each one of us according to our need. And our prayer is that our lives should be so filled with love for you and love for the Lord Jesus that our minds should be so brought to life and filled with agreement with the gospel and our hearts should become increasingly and deeply submitted to all that you are.

our prayer is that our lives will indeed be transformed and that, by your grace, you will help each of us to serve you with joy and to bring this message to others.

[ 23 : 39 ] And we ask it all in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.