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# JOHN: THAT YOU MAY BELIEVE

## *HEAR & OBEY CHRIST'S WORDS*

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A message presented by Pastor Marc Minter  
to First Baptist Church of Diana, TX on May 13, 2018

## INTRODUCTION

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The words of Jesus Christ are indeed the promises and precepts of eternal life. The one who hears and obeys Jesus has no judge, but rather enjoys freedom from condemnation altogether. But the one who does not receive Christ's words... who does not hear and obey Christ's words... that one will be judged and condemned by those same words on the last day. In this message, we shall consider the pleading and warning words of Christ at the close of His public ministry in the Gospel of John.

## MESSAGE MADE SIMPLE

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Jesus said, *"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"* (Jn. 12:48).

In some parts of America, the label "Christian" is still a celebrated identifier. What someone means by claiming such a moniker is usually little more than simply saying, "I believe in Jesus." But even this phrase begs greater specificity. What do you mean by "believe?" And who is "Jesus?" The Bible reveals substantial answers to these questions, and the Bible warns us to take the words seriously.

In fact, Jesus Himself so closely associated His person and His words that one cannot receive or reject one without doing the same to the other. To receive Jesus is to receive His words, and to reject His words is to reject Jesus. The plain and absolute nature of this proposition rubs against our modern sensibilities, but it is no less reasonable or consistent.

The words of Jesus Christ are indeed the promises and precepts of eternal life. The one who hears and obeys Jesus has no judge, but rather enjoys freedom from condemnation altogether. But the one who does not receive Christ's words... who does not hear and obey Christ's words... that one will be judged and condemned by those same words on the last day.

## **JOHN 12:44-50 (ESV)**

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.

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. 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.

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

## THE POINT I’M AIMING AT TODAY

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**Belief in Christ is hearing and obeying His words, so believe!**

## MESSAGE OUTLINE

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- (1) BELIEVING IS SEEING**
- (2) BELIEVING IS BOTH HEARING & OBEYING**
- (3) A SOBERING WARNING TO HEAR & OBEY**
- (4) APPLICATION: DO YOU BELIEVE?**

### (1) BELIEVING IS SEEING

- *If you believe Christ, then you see glorious things!*

1. You see Christ for who He is
2. You see the Father for who He is
3. You see the world as it is
4. You see yourself as you are

#### 1. Seeing Christ for who He is

- Christ is the **sent one from the Father**.
  - “him who **sent me**” (v44; cf. 1 Jn. 4:9)
- Christ is the **visible form** of the invisible **God**.
  - “whoever **sees me** sees him who sent me” (v45; cf. Col. 1:15)
- Christ is the **light of the world**.
  - “**I have come** into the world **as light**” (v46; cf. Jn. 8:12)
- Christ is the **savior** of the **world**.
  - “I did not come to **judge** the world but to **save** the world” (v47; cf. Titus 2:13)
- Christ speaks **authoritative words, judging the world** on last day.
  - “the **word** that **I have spoken** will **judge** him on the last day” (v48; cf. Rev. 22:12-13)
- Christ **speaks with** the **authority** of the **Father**.
  - “I have not spoken on **my own authority**, but **the Father** who sent me...” (v49; cf. Jn. 17:2)
- Christ speaks the very words that **the Father has told Him** to say.
  - “What I say, therefore, **I say as the Father** has told me” (v50; cf. Heb. 1:1–2)

## 2. Seeing the Father for who He is

- The **Father** is the **sender** of the **Son**.
  - “**him who sent me**” (v44; cf. Jn. 3:16)
- The **Father** makes **Himself visible** in the Son.
  - “**whoever sees me sees him who sent me**” (v45; cf. Jn. 1:18)
- The **Father** gives **His light** to the world through His Son.
  - “**I have come** into the world [sent from the Father] **as light**” (v46; cf. 2 Cor. 4:6)
- The **Father** did not **send His Son** into the world (in His first advent) to **condemn** sinners.
  - “I did not come [sent from the Father] to **judge** the world but to **save** the world” (v47; cf. Jn. 3:17)
- The **Father’s words** are **decisive** for final judgment on the last day.
  - “the **word** that I have spoken [words the Father told me to say] **will judge him on the last day**” (v48; cf. Rom. 2:5-6)
- The **Father** authoritatively **commands the Son**, right down to the words He speaks.
  - “the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment—**what to say and what to speak**” (v49; cf. Jn. 5:19)
- The **Father’s command** is eternal **life through** the **Son**.
  - “I know that **his commandment** [i.e. His word] **is eternal life**” (v50; cf. Jn. 17:3)
- Let’s just stop for a second and **praise God** for the **harmonious** working of the **Triune God**!
  - God **the Father** has **made Himself known** to the world as the God who saves through the person and work of His Son!
  - God **the Son** has perfectly **honored** and **obeyed** the Father in His work of both **revealing** God and **saving** sinners!

### 3. Seeing the world as it is

- This world is **darkened** to the **glory** of God/Christ.
  - “I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not **remain in darkness**” (v44-46; cf. 2 Cor. 4:4)
- This world is **under God’s judgment**, though spared for a time.
  - “I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. [But] 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**” (v47-48; cf. Jn. 3:18-19)
- **Some sinners** in this world are the **object** of God’s **saving** love.
  - “If anyone hears my words... I did not come to judge the world but **to save the world**” (v47; cf. Jn. 3:16)
    - The implication is that those who hear and DO keep Christ’s words are in fact the objects of saving love!
- Friends, how does this square with **your view of the world**?
  - **Do you think the world is inclined** towards regard for God, Christ, sin, judgment, and glory?
  - **How about neutral?** Do you think the world is not inclined towards reverence God/Christ, but not really hostile either?
  - Doesn’t a brief look at the world around us confirm that it is **neither reverent nor neutral** towards God?
  - And yet, **how humbling and comforting** is it to know that some sinners are **the objects of God’s saving love!**?

#### 4. *Seeing ourselves as we are*

- We are **naturally unbelieving**.
  - “**Whoever believes in me...**” (v44; cf. Rom. 1:18-20)
    - Belief is a **new posture**; therefore, the old/natural/default posture is unbelief.
- We **don't naturally see** God.
  - “**whoever sees me sees him who sent me**” (v45; cf. Jn. 1:18)
    - Sinners need **Christ** to **show** or **reveal** the Father; therefore, blindness is the natural reality.
- We **need light** from God.
  - “**I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness**” (v46; cf. James 1:16-18)
    - The world is **now in darkness**... Only the believing ones escape the shadows and enjoy Christ's brilliant light.
- We need a **savior** who **saves us** from **judgment**.
  - “**I did not come to judge the world but to save the world**” (v47; cf. Jn. 5:24)
    - Judgment is to be **expected**... but Christ came to offer salvation or **rescue** from **judgment**.
- Friends, let's take a moment to **consider our miserable situation** (apart from Christ).
  - We are **naturally under God's judgment... guilty** before Him.
    - Our guilt is not merely a **negative feeling** or a **self-esteem** problem.
    - As a **child of Adam**, God has judged you **guilty** (Rom. 5:12, 18; Jn. 3:18-19).
    - Because of **your failure to love** and **honor** Him with your life, God has judged you **guilty** (Rom. 2:1-11).

- But, we hear **words of hope** in this passage!
  - Though we are naturally unbelieving... we hear the **promise of hope** to “**Whoever believes!**”
- This begs the questions:
  - **(1) What is believing?** And **(2) How do we do it?**

## **(2) BELIEVING IS BOTH HEARING & OBEYING**

- ***Jesus’ words are closely associated with Jesus Himself***
  - “the one who **rejects me** and does not **receive my words...**” (v48)
    - Not receiving Jesus’ words is the same as rejecting Jesus.
    - Oh, friends, let us **hear this rebuke** today!
      - How common it is to hear people say that they **love** or **believe Jesus**, and yet these same people **avoid Jesus’ words...** This is foolishness at its worst!
      - Can I **love my wife** and never **hear her speak?**
      - Can I **love my friend** and **know nothing** of his **voice?**
    - And yet, how many **claim love** for Jesus and do this very thing?!
      - How many of **us** leave our **Bibles closed?**
      - How many of **us** want an **experience with Christ** apart from His word?
      - How many of **us** even **expect a mature love for Christ** to blossom in us without the diligent **study** and **application** of Christ’s words?
    - Furthermore, how many of our **friends** and **family** members think that they can **love Jesus in their own way** apart from His words – His commands?
      - How long will we **keep our mouths shut** while our friends and family **remain in conflict with the Jesus** they say they love?

- ***Believing is more than just hearing***
  - “If anyone **hears my words and does not keep them... the word** that I have spoken **will judge him** on the last day” (v47, 48)
    - Hearing Christ’s words is essential, but the not “keeping” them or disobeying those words merely confirms judgment.
  
- ***Believing is both Hearing & Obeying***
  - More specifically, one must hear to obey, and obedience is the observable expression of belief.
  - **John wants the reader to believe (20:31)**
    - “Whoever **believes in me**” believes the Father (v44)
    - “whoever **believes in me** may not remain in darkness” (v46)
  - **John wants the reader to ‘hear’ Christ’s words, because they are God’s words.**
    - “I have not **spoken** on my own authority... **I say** as the **Father** has told me” (v49, 50)
  - **John wants the reader to ‘receive’ or ‘obey’ Christ’s words, because this is what belief looks like.**
    - THEREFORE, “The one who **rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge...**” or WILL BE JUDGED (v48)
      - Once again, rejecting Christ’s words is a rejection of Christ... receiving Christ’s words is receiving Christ (and all that Christ is and does).
    - “Whoever **believes in the Son** has eternal life; whoever **does not obey the Son** shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him” (Jn. 3:36).
      - Note the interchangeable use of “believe” and “obey”

### (3) A SOBERING WARNING TO HEAR & OBEY

- ***Belief without Obedience is Nothing***

- Consider James' argument

James 2:14–24 – “14 What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has **faith** [i.e. belief] but does not have **works** [obedient deeds]? Can that **faith** [that kind of faith/belief] save him?

15 If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, 16 and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and filled,” without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? [What good is the statement without action to follow?]

**17 So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.**

18 But someone will say, “You have faith and I have works.” Show me your faith apart from your works, and **I will show you my faith by my works.**

19 You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder!

20 Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that **faith apart from works is useless**? 21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? 22 You see that **faith was active along with his works**, and faith was **completed** [finished / perfected] **by his works**; 23 and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness”—and he was called a friend of God.

24 You see that a person is **justified by works and not by faith alone.**”

Luther: “**We are saved by faith alone, but the faith that saves is never alone.**”

- Or, how about Jesus' short and direct statement: “16 You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? 17 So, **every healthy tree bears good fruit**, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. 18 A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. 19 Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20 Thus you will recognize them by their fruits” (Matt. 7:16–20).

- **Hearing without Obeying is Condemning**

- Let me quickly remind us of what the author of Hebrews says about disobedience and the hardening of our hearts
- Hebrews 3:6–4:13 – “6 Christ is faithful over God’s house as a son. And we are his house, **if indeed we hold fast** our confidence and our boasting in our hope.
- 7 Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, “Today, if you hear his voice, 8 do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, on the day of testing in the wilderness, 9 where your fathers put me to the test and saw my works for forty years... [Israel’s disobedience brought God’s judgment against them... Those who heard His voice and disobeyed were not allowed to enter the promised land]
- 12 **Take care, brothers**, lest there be in any of you an **evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away** from the living God. [Can a Christian brother or sister fall away from God? No! But professing Christians fall away all the time... This is a warning.]
- 13 But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be **hardened by the deceitfulness of sin...**
- 15 As it is said, “Today, if you hear his voice, **do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.**” 16 For who were those who **heard and yet rebelled?** Was it not all those who left Egypt led by Moses? [Wasn’t it those who had seen God work and heard God speak?!]
- 4:2 good news came to us just as to them, but **the message they heard did not benefit them**, because they were **not united by faith** with those who listened. [They heard, but did not believe/obey]
- 11 **Let us therefore strive to enter that rest**, so that no one may **fall by** the same sort of **disobedience**. 12 For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the **thoughts and intentions of the heart**. 13 And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are **naked and exposed** to the eyes of **him to whom we must give account.**”

## **(4) APPLICATION: DO YOU BELIEVE?**

### ***1. Do you believe?***

#### **a. Well, do you see?**

- i. Do you see **Christ as glorious**?
- ii. Do you see the **Father as gracious**?
- iii. Do you see **yourself as undeserving**, yet **beloved** by God?

### ***2. Do you believe?***

#### **a. Well, do you hear?**

- i. Do you **expect to know** God... to **know Christ** through His **word**?
- ii. Do you **attend** these church **services** with **open ears**, **intending to hear words** from Christ?
- iii. Do you **open your Bible**, giving **attention** to the **words** God has so graciously given to you?

### ***3. Do you believe?***

#### **a. Well, do you obey?**

- i. Do you think you have earned some **heavenly points** by being **present** in the service **today**?
- ii. Do you think your **familiarity** with a certain facet of **systematic theology** equals **Christian maturity**?
- iii. Do you think the number of **sermons** you've heard, or **preachers** you know, or **likes you've given** to Bible verses posted on social media is how God measures your belief?

### ***4. What do I do if I notice I'm not seeing, hearing, or obeying?***

- a. Please don't think the point of this message is to **see clearer** or **hear better** or to **obey harder**?
- b. Think of these things as more of a **diagnostic**.
- c. Remember the main point: **Belief in Christ is hearing and obeying His words, so believe!**

## SUGGESTED RESOURCES

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***The Final Notice*** by Steven Cole

<https://bible.org/seriespage/lesson-70-final-notice-john-1244-50>

***Eternal Life as 'Justification' in John's Gospel*** by A.B. Caneday

<http://equip.sbts.edu/publications/journals/journal-of-theology/gods-incarnate-son-as-the-embodiment-of-last-day-resurrection-eternal-life-as-justification-in-johns-gospel/>

***What the Word of God says about the Word of God*** by Jared Wilson

<https://ftc.co/resource-library/blog-entries/what-the-word-of-god-says-about-the-word-of-god-book-by-book>

***Twelve Principles of Judgment*** by George Parsons

<http://www.middletonbiblechurch.org/romans/judgment.htm>