

The Most Important Choice You'll Ever Make

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On January 18, 1947, about 165 people had gathered at Drake Hotel in Chicago to hear General Dwight D. Eisenhower speak. After his talk, he allowed some questions to be asked. A reporter had asked Eisenhower what was the most important choice he had to make during the planning of the D-Day invasion. We've heard about the choice he had to make about when to start the invasion. The weather was causing major issues. General Eisenhower wanted to go on June 5, but he had to push it forward to June 6th and even that was a gamble. Some thought this was the biggest choice General Eisenhower had to make in the planning of the D-Day invasion. However, this question from a report changed that thinking. Eisenhower would reveal that there was something that required a bigger choice for him and it deals with this famous picture:



You see, Generals usually didn't see off the troops, but this was different for Eisenhower. He is seen in this picture talking to paratroopers in England before

they boarded the airplanes to take part in the first assault in the D-Day invasion. These men were involved in the biggest choice Eisenhower had to make. In the early part of the planning for D-Day, it became known that for the plan to work, Germany could not be allowed to bring up reinforcements during the invasion. All roads and rail lines had to be blocked or destroyed before the invasion started. So, the plan was made to have the paratroopers land behind the enemy lines and take care of the roads and rail lines. Just days before May 30, a high ranking officer asked Eisenhower to call off the airborne landings. The report came that there was a good possibility that there would be a 90 % casualty rate amount the glider troops. For the paratroops, it could be a 75% loss or 13,000 to 18,000 men lost. Eisenhower had to make a choice. It came down to the men on the beaches. Eisenhower knew that if German reinforcements came to the beaches, the Allied Army on the beach wouldn't have a chance. He made the choice to have the paratroopers and the glider troops to go in after much painful thought. So, Eisenhower made a special trip to encourage and to show his support to these brave men. When the last plane went into the air, Eisenhower was seen with tears in his eyes knowing his choice could cost these brave men their lives. The good news was there was only 8% casualties. This was from an article in The Saturday Evening Post. What a tough choice General Eisenhower had to make. We may think we never want to have to make that kind of choice, but it's a plain fact that every person on this earth has to make the most important choice of their life at some point – a life-or-death choice. What choice I'm I talking about?

For the past few weeks, we have been digging into the Gospel of John. John has been painting a good picture of Jesus and His character and we have been seeing that with how Jesus reaches out to people. Last week, we looked into Jesus reaching out to a man who had been ill for 38 years till Jesus touched him. We learned that Jesus would reach people either through questions, needs, or through illnesses not just to heal them, but to reach them spiritually – heart and mind. We've seen how good Jesus was in doing that. Let's dig a little deeper into John because I believe John has more to tell us about Jesus. Let's turn to John 7: 25-32 where we read this, "²⁵ Some of the people who lived in Jerusalem started to ask each other, 'Isn't this the man they are trying to kill?' ²⁶ But here he is,

speaking in public, and they say nothing to him. Could our leaders possibly believe that he is the Messiah? ²⁷ But how could he be? For we know where this man comes from. When the Messiah comes, he will simply appear; no one will know where he comes from.”

²⁸ While Jesus was teaching in the Temple, he called out, “Yes, you know me, and you know where I come from. But I’m not here on my own. The one who sent me is true, and you don’t know him. ²⁹ But I know him because I come from him, and he sent me to you.” ³⁰ Then the leaders tried to arrest him; but no one laid a hand on him, because his time^[a] had not yet come.

³¹ Many among the crowds at the Temple believed in him. “After all,” they said, “would you expect the Messiah to do more miraculous signs than this man has done?”

³² When the Pharisees heard that the crowds were whispering such things, they and the leading priests sent Temple guards to arrest Jesus. (NLT – www.biblegateway.com)

Jesus has gone into Jerusalem for the Festival of Shelters. This festival was held in October and it commemorated the days when the Israelites wandered in the wilderness and lived in shelters. It was a known fact that the Jewish leaders were looking for Jesus during this festival. They were plotting His death and Jesus tells us in verse 6 that His time had not come yet, so Jesus waited. Finally, when Jesus finally makes His appearance at the Temple, He starts to teach. We then come to the Scripture we just read. Jesus is teaching and the people start to question who is this Jesus and why have the Jewish leaders not arrested Jesus yet. You see, Jesus was causing a great stir in the Middle East area. We see in verse 27 that some were confused because they knew where Jesus came from and they thought no one would know where the Messiah would come from. There was a false theory at this time that no one would know where the Messiah would come from even though Old Testament prophecy tells the Messiah would come from Bethlehem. Then, Jesus tells them, “I am not here on my own, but he who sent me is true. You do not know him, but I know him because I am from him and he sent me.” I’ll be honest with you, if I was there, I would say, “What did He just say?”. Jesus said a tongue twister here and Jesus would be that to get the people to think. Jesus got some people mad because Jesus said He was from God in verse 29. We see this theme throughout the Gospel of John that Jesus is the Son

of God. Some that were questioning Jesus got set off because they would consider what Jesus said blasphemy. Again, it was not time yet for Jesus to be executed and the people could not lay their hands on Him. Then we read that still there were many who believed in Jesus. So, we have two groups here. The first group contains actually two groups. One group already had made their choice about Jesus long ago and wanted nothing to do with Him. The second part of this group was wandering about Jesus and then made the choice to reject Jesus. These two parts made the choice to reject Jesus as a group. On the other side of the coin, we have the group that made the choice to believe in Jesus. There is not a third group here. So, this tells us that a choice has to be made by us that we either believe in Jesus or not believe in Jesus. But there is more.

Let's continue with John in the same chapter verse 33, "³³ But Jesus told them, 'I will be with you only a little longer. Then I will return to the one who sent me. ³⁴ You will search for me but not find me. And you cannot go where I am going.'"

³⁵ The Jewish leaders were puzzled by this statement. "Where is he planning to go?" they asked. "Is he thinking of leaving the country and going to the Jews in other lands?^[a] Maybe he will even teach the Greeks!" ³⁶ What does he mean when he says, 'You will search for me but not find me,' and 'You cannot go where I am going'?" ³⁷ On the last day, the climax of the festival, Jesus stood and shouted to the crowds, "Anyone who is thirsty may come to me!" ³⁸ Anyone who believes in me may come and drink! For the Scriptures declare, 'Rivers of living water will flow from his heart.'^[b] ³⁹ (When he said "living water," he was speaking of the Spirit, who would be given to everyone believing in him. But the Spirit had not yet been given,^[c] because Jesus had not yet entered into his glory.) (NLT-
www.biblegateway.com)

The Jewish leaders are having a Nicodemus moment here. Jesus is making reference to the Easter event that would happen later in Scripture. Then Jesus continues by talking about "living water will flow from his heart". John wants to make it very clear that Jesus is talking about the Holy Spirit would be living within us after Jesus would enter into His glory. When we make the choice to believe in Jesus, His Spirit takes up residence within us. If we go back to Nicodemus, Jesus told him he had to be born again. In other words, we make the choice to believe in Jesus with the understanding we must be born again through the Spirit. We make the choice we no longer want to be like we were before the rebirth. Not

only do you make the choice to believe in Jesus, but also believe that you will become anew through Jesus. If you make the choice to believe in Jesus and remain a sinful person you are no different than the devil himself. Many in the American Church has watered down the Gospel message so much that now all is required is to believe in Jesus and that is it. That is false teaching and we know that from the three past stories in Scripture we looked at in the past three weeks. All three people Jesus touched was not the same. In fact, Jesus told the man last week to stop sinning. He was not to live like he used to. Folks, we must realize the importance of the choice we have to make about Jesus. Either we are all in for Jesus or we reject Him. If you say I believe in Jesus but I will continue (choose) with the sinful life I've always lived, isn't this saying I believe in Jesus' name only and reject the rest? We have to make the choice to allow the Living Water within us to do His work. Jesus tells the Church this in Acts 1:8, "But when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, you will receive power and will tell people about me everywhere – in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. (NLT)" Think about it for a moment. Did you tell people about Jesus before you were saved? I know I didn't. It's different now because one day I made the choice to be all in for Jesus. Have you made the choice to be all for Jesus or do you cling too much with this world?

Let's look at one more thing in this chapter of John, ⁴⁰ "When the crowds heard him say this, some of them declared, "Surely this man is the Prophet we've been expecting."^[a] ⁴¹ Others said, "He is the Messiah." Still others said, "But he can't be! Will the Messiah come from Galilee?" ⁴² For the Scriptures clearly state that the Messiah will be born of the royal line of David, in Bethlehem, the village where King David was born."^[b] ⁴³ So the crowd was divided about him. (NLT – www.biblegateway.com)

Those who make the choice to not believe in Jesus, the Messiah, will always live in doubt and uncertainty. The great question for many unbelievers is there really a Hell. Even though they may say they don't believe in Jesus, deep down inside they have a fear of the uncertainty of Hell. I had the same issue before I allowed Jesus into my heart. What happens if there is a Hell? That uncertainty will make a person miserable and uncomfortable. Mark 16:16 states, "Anyone who believes and is baptized will be saved. But anyone who refuses to believe will be condemned. (NLT)" Peter states this in Acts 2: 38, "Each of you must turn from your sins and turn to God, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. (NLT)" Jesus makes this statement about those who

make the choice to reject Him in Matthew 26: 41-46, ⁴¹ “Then the King will turn to those on the left and say, ‘Away with you, you cursed ones, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his demons.^[a] ⁴² For I was hungry, and you didn’t feed me. I was thirsty, and you didn’t give me a drink. ⁴³ I was a stranger, and you didn’t invite me into your home. I was naked, and you didn’t give me clothing. I was sick and in prison, and you didn’t visit me.’

⁴⁴ “Then they will reply, ‘Lord, when did we ever see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and not help you?’

⁴⁵ “And he will answer, ‘I tell you the truth, when you refused to help the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were refusing to help me.’

⁴⁶ “And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous will go into eternal life.”

This choice will be the most important choice you’ll ever make for this choice will determine your eternal life. General Eisenhower had to make some tough choices, but you have to make a tough choice as well. There is no middle ground here. Remember what Jesus told the Church in Laodicea, “I know all the things you do, that you are neither hot nor cold. I wish you were one or the other! But since you are lukewarm water, I will spit you out of my mouth! (NLT)” Today can be the day where you ask Jesus into your heart, ask for the forgiveness of your sins, tell Him that you believe in Him and love Him and you will become a new person through Jesus. His Spirit will make permanent residence inside you and that choice will give you eternal life with Jesus in Heaven. The other choice leads to total death and Hell. What’s your choice?

NLT Life Application Study Bible. Tyndale House Publishers, Inc: Wheaton, 1996.