

“Who has believed our report?”

*John 12:36-41*

*36 "While you have the Light, believe in the Light, so that you may become sons of Light."*

*These things Jesus spoke, and He went away and hid Himself from them. 37 But though He had performed so many signs before them, yet they were not believing in Him. 38 This was to fulfill the word of Isaiah the prophet which he spoke: "LORD, WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR REPORT? AND TO WHOM HAS THE ARM OF THE LORD BEEN REVEALED?" 39 For this reason they could not believe, for Isaiah said again, 40 "HE HAS BLINDED THEIR EYES AND HE HARDENED THEIR HEART, SO THAT THEY WOULD NOT SEE WITH THEIR EYES AND PERCEIVE WITH THEIR HEART, AND BE CONVERTED AND I HEAL THEM." 41 These things Isaiah said because he saw His glory, and he spoke of Him.*

When Jesus went away and hid Himself, it marked the end of His public ministry. /The rest of chapter 12, from verses 37-50, provides a summation of that public ministry.\ There are two parts.

/In the first part, verses 37-43, John reflects on the tragic mystery of Jewish unbelief: the widespread rejection of Jesus by the nation of Israel.\

/In the second part, verses 44-50, Jesus gives a succinct summary of the teaching He had given concerning His own identify as the one who had been sent by His Father.\

At the beginning the gospel of John, he prepared the reader to expect that Jesus would be rejected by the Jewish nation:

*John 1:11*

*11 He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him.*

Now, John is looking back on the 3 ½ year public ministry of Jesus. Time after time, John witnessed first-hand the extent and ferociousness of this rejection of the Jews.

How can this be explained?

/John turns to the prophet Isaiah for answers.\ Isaiah too had been warned at the outset of his public ministry that the Jewish nation would reject his message.

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/Verse 37 is an apt summary of Jewish unbelief as recorded in the gospel of John.\

Jesus performed many signs in Judea, the home of the Jews. He healed the invalid at Bethesda (5:1-9). He gave sight to the man born blind (9:1-14). He raised Lazarus from the grave (11:1-44). He performed many other signs along the way, to which John refers as a group.

But after each miracle, the Pharisees and/or chief priests did their level best to stop the people from believing in Him.

/Miracles alone will not penetrate the heart that refuses to hear the Word of God.\

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/In verse 38, John says that this Jewish unbelief fulfilled prophecy.\ He turns to the prophet Isaiah, quoting Isaiah 53:1.

*Isa 53:1-3*

*Who has believed our message?*

*And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?*

*2 For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot,*

*And like a root out of parched ground;*

*He has no stately form or majesty*

*That we should look upon Him,  
Nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him.  
3 He was despised and forsaken of men,  
A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;  
And like one from whom men hide their face  
He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.*

/This is in the fourth Servant Song of Isaiah. The Servant is the Lord Jesus Christ.\

Here we have it: Jesus' own people despised Him. They said He had a demon. They accused Him of blasphemy. They hated Him without a cause.

Who has believed our message, Isaiah cries out. Not many, even though the Lord had revealed His arm to them.

/The arm of the Lord refers to His power.\ The miracles that Jesus performed revealed the arm of the Lord to the Jews of His generation.

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/John turns to the prophet Isaiah again to explain the problem of Jewish unbelief.\

*Isa 6:1-10*

*In the year of King Uzziah's death I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple. 2 Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. 3 And one called out to another and said, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts, The whole earth is full of His glory." 4 And the foundations of the thresholds trembled at the voice of him who called out, while the temple was filling with smoke. 5 Then I said, "Woe is me, for I am ruined!*

*Because I am a man of unclean lips,  
And I live among a people of unclean lips;  
For my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts."*

*6 Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a burning coal in his hand, which he had taken from the altar with tongs. 7 He touched my mouth with it and said, "Behold, this has touched your lips; and your iniquity is taken away and your sin is forgiven."*

*8 Then I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?" Then I said, "Here am I. Send me!" 9 He said, "Go, and tell this people:*

*'Keep on listening, but do not perceive;  
Keep on looking, but do not understand.'  
10 "Render the hearts of this people insensitive,  
Their ears dull  
,And their eyes dim,  
Otherwise they might see with their eyes,  
Hear with their ears,  
Understand with their hearts,  
And return and be healed."*

/The Lord commissions Isaiah to speak to the nation of Judah on His behalf.\  
I want to point out two things here.

First, /Isaiah is given a stunning vision of the Lord – Adonay. The proper name of God in the Hebrew Old Testament.\ He is seated on His throne in the Temple, with His attending angels singing songs of worship and praise.

Second, when you consider what John says in John 12:41, *These things Isaiah said because he saw His glory, and he spoke of Him*, it becomes clear that/ Isaiah received a vision of the pre-incarnate Christ! This proves that Jesus Christ is God.\

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/These verses require careful treatment to avoid the pitfall of drawing false doctrinal conclusions.\

Isaiah was told that his teaching would *render the hearts of this people insensitive, Their ears dull, and their eyes dim.*

John says that Jesus blinded their eyes and hardened their heart. He did this with His miracles and His teachings. The Law aroused the sinful passions (Rom 7:5,8).

/The words and works of Jesus provoked unbelief in hearts that were so inclined.\

/These Jews did not believe (verses 37-38), until, finally, they could not believe (verses 39-40).\

But here's the thing: / Isaiah heard these words at the beginning of his ministry.\ It was a prediction. He was looking forward to the future.

/But John quoted these words with regard to the end of Jesus' ministry.\ He was looking back.

/John records the result of Jesus' public ministry.\

/This is not the purpose that God assigned to His public ministry.\

*John 3:16-17*

*16 "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. 17 "For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.*

/God did not predestine the Jews to unbelief.\ The Bible says in 2 Peter 3:9 that the Lord is not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.

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So what happened?

/They rejected the message of the gospel. They rejected the Son of God.\ They refused to believe in Him, over and over and over again. It was their doing, not God's.

/Finally, the Lord granted their request. He gave them over to their unbelief.\ They loved the darkness. The more they loved it, the more they rejected the light. Finally, they seared their own consciences as with a branding iron.

/ He made it official. He blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts.\

*Ps 81:11-12*

*11 "But My people did not listen to My voice,  
And Israel did not obey Me.*

*12 "So I gave them over to the stubbornness of their heart,  
To walk in their own devices.*

Make no mistake: God will eventually give people over to what they love once they have made it clear that no amount of entreaty will ever convince them otherwise.

*Rom 1:21-25*

*21 For even though they knew God, **they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.***

*22 Professing to be wise, they became fools, 23 and exchanged the glory of the*

*incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures.*

***24 Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them. 25 For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.***

/If they persist in their unbelief, unbelievers face a frightening prospect.\ They need to learn the fear of the Lord. This is a serious and solemn thing.

Today, you may be close to completely hardening your heart to God. Or perhaps a close friend or family member is about to sear their own conscience.

I beg you, whoever you are: be reconciled to God. While you can still make out the light of the gospel, believe in the Light: Jesus Christ. You may only have a little while left to do so before the darkness completely overtakes you.