

STANLEY FAITH EV FREE

Pastor Michael Thompson Sunday June 11th, 2017

John 12:37-43 Unbelief

REVIEW / INTRODUCTION

Last time we were in John we read about Jesus and His revulsion to the crucifixion He knew was coming soon. Instead of seeking to avoid the cross He said to the Father; “be glorified.” Jesus was willing to embrace the suffering of the cross if it would bring glory to The Father.

Then if you recall The Father spoke from heaven so that everyone could hear Him. He said to Jesus; “*you have already glorified My name and will glorify it again.*”

Even with The Father speaking out loud from heaven many refused to believe. “There must be some logical explanation, maybe it was thunder,” they said! In verse 37 John continues his thoughts about the unbelief of so many in the crowd.

CONTEXT

Before we dig into the text I want to show you the context. In this particular passage we have to understand the context in order to fully understand what John is trying to teach us.

CONTEXT INTRO

The end of Chapter 12 (which we will cover today) summarized the early ministry of Jesus. Then beginning in Chapter 13 John changes his focus from the earthly ministry of Jesus and in Chapter 13 he begins to describe the last days OF Jesus leading up to His crucifixion.

So today we cover John’s summary of the first 12 chapters.

READING THE TEXT -- John 12:37-43 (ESV)

³⁷ Though he had done so many signs before them, they still did not believe in him, ³⁸ so that the word spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled:

“Lord, who has believed what he heard from us,

and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?”

³⁹ **Therefore they could not believe. For again Isaiah said,**

⁴⁰ **“He has blinded their eyes**

and hardened their heart,

lest they see with their eyes,

and understand with their heart, and turn,

and I would heal them.”

⁴¹ **Isaiah said these things because he saw his glory and spoke of him.⁴² Nevertheless, many even of the authorities believed in him, but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it, so that they would not be put out of the synagogue; ⁴³ for they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God.**

PREACHING THE TEXT

John 12:37-43 (ESV)

³⁷ **Though he had done so many signs before them, they still did not believe in him,**

In chapter one John wrote ***“He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him” (John 1:11)***. Then in the next 12 chapters John gives us many examples of specific ways in which Jesus was rejected by His own.

John begins as to why the Religious Leaders did not receive Jesus when he says;

³⁸ **so that the word spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled:**

“Lord, who has believed what he heard from us,

and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?”

The arm of the Lord refers to the strength and power of God. The arm of the Lord is at work, but not everyone has the spiritual eyes and godly understanding and courage to know and confess Jesus as Lord and Christ. Or perhaps they do not like what they see. Perhaps Jesus is not what they expect or demand of a Savior.

SO THAT ISAIAH MIGHT BE FULFILLED

How did their unbelief fulfill Isaiah? Isaiah was a prophet who spoke the word of The Lord under the power of The Spirit. But Isaiah's words had no effect on many of his listeners. In Isaiah 6 we read about Isaiah experiencing the presence of God's glory. So powerful was the revealing of God's glory that Isaiah fell on His face and cried ***holy, holy holy is the Lord God almighty***. Then God cleansed Isaiah's heart and speech and sent him to preach repentance and obedience to Israel. Isaiah spoke the word of the Lord under the power of God's Spirit and glory.

Let's compare Isaiah's ministry with the ministry of Jesus. Jesus Christ not only witnesses God's glory, Jesus Christ IS the very glory of God. He is called the radiance of God's glory.

Hebrews 1:3

He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power.

And despite being the radiance of God's glory and the true revelation of the Trinitarian God Jesus experienced the same rejection as Isaiah. The Religious Leaders did not want Isaiah's message of repentance. The Religious Leaders did not like the plainness and humility and passivity of Jesus Christ. They rejected the way that God revealed His glory through humble servants like Isaiah and Jesus.

³⁹ **Therefore they could not believe. For again Isaiah said,**

⁴⁰ **“He has blinded their eyes**

and hardened their heart,

HOW ISRAEL WAS BLINDED

Did you notice verse 39 said; ***“they could not believe.”***? God Himself caused unbelief in the Religious Leaders and hardened their hearts toward His Son. How did God harden their hearts? God hardened hearts of Israel's Leaders by sending them what they were not looking for and what they would certainly reject. So what were they looking for? Who is it they would have accepted?

WHO WERE THEY LOOKING FOR?

When Saul the handsome tall and popular prom king prototype was presented as Israel's first king the people cheered and rushed to crown this popular figure as the visible leader of Israel. He was handsome, popular and strong. He would be acceptable to Israel. Samson was cheered on by Israelites for being a fierce warrior killing thousands of Philistines by Himself. They shared Samson's violent hatred for non-Jews. Samson is a leader they could get behind. He would whip some Philistine butt for them.

King Saul disobeyed God and turned into a jealous killer who tried to kill King David. And the book of Judges portrays Samson as one of the most tragic morally bankrupt leaders in scripture. But Israel would accept these flawed figures because they appealed to the flesh and to our desire to kill our enemies and gain bragging rights over our land and possessions.

GOD SENT A PACIFIST

But God hardened the hearts of the religious leaders in Jesus day by sending a pacifist who was rather plain looking. He was more interested in healing the sick and teaching from God's word than battle plans and political maneuvering. He was not interested in receiving and returning favors and kissing up to politicians. He was not what they expected or wanted; and this is how God in His providence exposed their true heart condition.

Unlike Saul and his charismatic good looks and Sampson with His strength and shared hatred and Solomon with his wisdom here is Isaiah's description of Jesus Christ whom God sent to Israel;

(Isaiah 53:2-3)

"He had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men" .

So the point is that Isaiah prophesied that this suffering servant would be rejected. Israel would not believe on him. Which is why John says in 12:38, "Who has believed?" Why did they not believe? Because he had no form or majesty that we should look at him. As a man, he was simply not the stuff Messiah's are made of. Not the kind of Messiah they wanted.

He was not a Navy Seal. He was not a politician with loads of PAC money and favors to call in. He did not hate the neighbors of Israel but wanted to save them and speak works of life to them. Nothing galvanizes like a common hatred of a common enemy. And few things tick off a hater more than loving the person or people he or she hates.

Then in [John 12:40](#) John quotes [Isaiah 6:10](#) which describes what was going to happen when Isaiah preached the vision that he saw of God's glory in:

Isaiah 6:1–3,

“I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up. . . Above him stood the seraphim. . . . And one called to another and said: “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!””

God told Isaiah that when he preached this great and glorious God the people would not believe. They would in fact be blinded and hardened. Why? Because they did not want to hear of such majesty and glory and power and holiness.

BY LOWLINESS AND MAJESTY

So how was God blinding and hardening in these two passages? In the one he was sending a lowly servant — a man — with no majesty and no beauty, no form, no desirableness, knowing that he would be despised and rejected.

In the other passage (Isaiah 6) God was revealing his glory in great splendor and majesty and holiness, knowing that they did not want this kind of glory and would be hardened and driven away by it.

In other words, it looks like the way God planned to blind and harden many in Israel was by sending them a Messiah whom He knew they were wired to reject. They did not want his lowliness and they did not want his glorious deity. But that's what they would get, and God knew the effect that it would have, and he sent him anyway, and thus blinded them with the human weakness and divine glory of Jesus.

God could have given Jesus the appearance of the prom king. And if He did, it would have appealed to their desire to give glory to man and operate in the flesh rather than the Spirit. But He did not;.....

lest they see with their eyes,

and understand with their heart, and turn,

and I would heal them.”

Verses 41 through 42 show us that those people who failed to believe and whose heart was hardened are guilty of their sin. They can't blame it on God and predestination. God's predestination work was in exposing in a brilliant way the condition in their hearts.

⁴¹ Isaiah said these things because he saw his glory and spoke of him.⁴² Nevertheless, many even of the authorities believed in him, but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it, so that they would not be put out of the synagogue;

Jesus comes as a pacifist who fights demons instead of people. He calls us to fight demons instead of people. He does not show favoritism but rebukes unloving religious organizations with political power plays showing no sign of fear.

This text tells us that **many believed secretly** in their minds and hearts that Jesus was indeed the Messiah. They believed intellectually. But that is not enough to be saved. There are stated beliefs and then there are control beliefs. Control beliefs are beliefs that are so ingrained in our heart and soul that we take action. Our belief controls our behavior.

For those who love Jesus and long for the glory of God in your life, you will not back down no matter who mocks you or won't hang out with you anymore. For those who put the kingdom of God first even if there is a cost involved, and for those who are willing to pick up everything and follow Jesus wherever He calls you in this world; I applaud you. You love God's glory more than the glory that comes from people.

If you are mostly interested in compliments and honors in this life based on your looks or performance or achievements or titles or power...than you may not be interested in the power and glory of God being unleashed in your life. You may love the glory of man more than the glory of our great God and Savior. May God speak to you deeply today and heal you from your desire for performance based applause and circumstantial happiness.

Know that even people who call themselves believers can struggle with the same mindset as those Religious Leaders who knew in their mind Jesus is Lord and Savior, but out of fear they said nothing and did nothing with their faith. And here is why.

⁴³ for they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God.

The good news is that God can create life out of dirt. And He can breathe life into hearts of stone.

TAKING IT HOME

1. Do you know the joy and pleasure that comes from the presence of God's glory?
2. Do you know that the powerful life changing experience of The Holy Spirit when we love God's glory, the glory of Jesus Christ more than the glory of other people?
3. What are some of the things The Holy Spirit is bringing to mind as you process this message? What action is He calling you to take?

The answer is grace and the power of God's Spirit to raise people from the dead. God can cause you and I to love His glory more than the glory of people.

SUMMARY / CHALLENGE

***CONGREGATION PRAY FOR YOUR UNBELIEVING FAMILY AND FRIENDS.**