

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

Why Was Jesus Rejected John 12:39-43 Part Two

Last year I talked to a man who had turned away from the Christian faith. Do you know why he turned away? He told me he turned away because he believed that he had not seen a true conversion.

He looked at his life and he looked at the lives of other so-called believers and he did not see any significant difference between them and those who had never made professions of faith.

So, what does this tell us? I believe it tells us a whole lot more about this man and those he had chosen to look at, than it does the message of Christ. This man for whatever reason may have thought he and those he had chosen to look at had made genuine professions of faith, but the truth was they had not. Why would I say this? I would say this because if they had truly come to know Christ, and had seen the glory of Christ through eyes of faith, they would have been changed.

In how many ways would they have been changed? They would have been changed in a myriad of different ways, but one way I am confident they would have changed would have been their desire to bear witness to Christ whenever and wherever possible.

How can believers, once they have come to Christ and have seen the glory of Christ, keep it to themselves? It would be very unnatural. We will certainly see this truth demonstrated in the passage that we will be examining this weekend.

We are presently studying **John 12**. This chapter began with a dinner party at the house of Simon the leper in the town of Bethany just two miles east of Jerusalem. This stopover at this dinner party not only made it possible for the people in Jerusalem to be informed that Jesus was in Bethany, but that it was His intent to enter Jerusalem the next day to celebrate the Jewish Passover.

The dissemination of this information prompted tens of thousands of Jewish pilgrims, the day after the party, to intercept Jesus as He made His way down from Bethany to the city of Jerusalem. And how did they greet Jesus? These tens of thousands of Jewish pilgrims, while waving palm branches, greeted Jesus by crying out, "**Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel.**"

It might have seemed at this moment in time, to His disciples, to the Jewish multitude, and even to the Jewish leadership, that Jesus was in a great position to seize the throne of Israel. But this was not His plan. He did not enter into Jerusalem to seize the throne and establish His earthly kingdom but rather He entered Jerusalem to die.

And He certainly did not hide this fact from His disciples after He entered Jerusalem. He told them plainly that He was planning to die so that others might live.

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

He then challenged the Jewish multitude to make a choice between light and darkness. If they chose to embrace Him as their Messiah, they would be choosing the light and therefore life. But if they chose to reject Him as their Messiah, they would be choosing darkness and therefore death.

After Jesus presented this challenge in the last part of **John 12:36**, the apostle told us "**He departed and hid Himself from them,**" or in other words, He hid Himself from the Jewish multitude. Why? Would He have done this? Jesus hid Himself because He already knew what they were going to choose. He already knew that they were going to choose darkness and therefore death.

So, how could this be? How could this Jewish multitude, or in other words, how could the nation of Israel reject their Messiah? And how could Jesus have known that this was exactly what they were going to do? In order to answer these questions the apostle begins by giving us certain facts about Jewish unbelief in **John 12:37-43**. We have already looked at two of these facts.

The first fact about Jewish unbelief is that they dismissed the evidence (John 12:37). Let me read for you **John 12:37. "But though He had performed so many signs before them, yet they were not believing in Him."** So, how was it that the Jewish multitude could reject their very own Messiah? They were able to reject their very own Messiah because they were able to dismiss the evidence, or in other words, the many "signs" that had been done before them. Therefore, it was not the lack of evidence that was the problem in respect to the rejection of Christ, but rather an unwillingness to consider the evidence that Christ had provided.

So, what is the first fact about Jewish unbelief that the apostle shares with us in **John 12:37-43**? The first fact about Jewish unbelief is that the Jews rejected Jesus in spite of the evidence. So, what is the second fact about Jewish unbelief that the apostle shares with us in **John 12:37-43**?

The second fact about Jewish unbelief is that the unbelief of so many Jews, in spite of the evidence, fulfills prophecy (John 12:38). Let me read for you once again **John 12:37**, but this time let me also read **John 12:38. "But though He had performed so many signs before them, yet they were not believing in Him; (38) that the word of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spoke, 'Lord, who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?'"**

The rejection of Christ by the Jewish nation in spite of the evidence was fully anticipated in Isaiah's prophecy in **Isaiah 53:1**. Therefore, in light of Isaiah's prophecy, the rejection of Christ by the Jewish people in spite of the evidence should in no way be surprising. Rather, it is totally what we should have been expected. The rejection of Christ by the nation of Israel in spite of the evidence therefore should not in any way diminish our faith, but rather it should only strengthen our faith.

So, what are the facts we have so far learned about Jewish unbelief? The first fact about Jewish unbelief is that they rejected Christ in spite of the evidence (**John 12:37**). And the second fact about Jewish unbelief is that their rejection of Christ in spite of the evidence was prophetically anticipated (**John 12:38**). So, what is the third fact about Jewish unbelief that John shares with us in this passage?

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

The third fact about Jewish unbelief in the time of Christ was that God was its ultimate cause (John 12:39-40). I know that this might seem like an extreme statement, but I believe that it is a biblical statement.

Take a look at **John 12:39**. What does it say? "**For this cause they could not believe.**" Who could not believe? The Jewish multitude that was rejecting Christ in spite of all the evidence could not believe. This is what John is telling us.

It had been prophesied in Isaiah 53:1 that the Jews would not believe, and according to John 12:37 they did not believe, and John 12:39 is now telling us that they could not believe.

Why could they not believe? John explains this to us in the next verse. Let me read for you **John 12:40**. "**He has blinded their eyes, and He hardened their heart.**"

The explanation that the apostle gives in John 12:40 for why the Jews could not believe in John 12:39 comes from a quotation in Isaiah 6:9-10.

In **Isaiah 6**, the prophet, after being granted a vision of the Lord, repented and offered to serve the Lord as His messenger. He was then commissioned to go to the Jewish people, but the Lord tells him that his message would be ignored, scorned and rejected. Why would this happen? This would happen because God, in essence, made it happen by blinding the eyes and hardening the heart of the Jewish people during Isaiah's public ministry.

This hardening that Isaiah spoke about, which occurred during his public ministry, is the same kind of hardening that took place, according to John, during Christ's public ministry. So, why couldn't the Jews, during Christ's public ministry, believe? What is John's explanation?

The Jewish people could not believe Christ because God had blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts (John 12:40).

But even though God had blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts, this certainly did not mean that they were not responsible for their rejection of Christ. They were totally responsible.

Though God blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts, the blinding and hardening was not apart from or against their will. They were therefore responsible for their rejection of Christ.

These Jews chose evil. It was their own deliberate choice, their own fault. We should make no mistake about that. Throughout the Gospel, the apostle has insisted on the seriousness of the decision forced on the Jews by the presence of Christ. John is not denying any of that in **John 12:40**.

But he is saying that the ultimate cause for the Jews' rejection of Christ and in essence anybody's rejection of Christ will be found in the will of God (Romans 9:14-18).

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

Some people might be quick to say that this is not right. Some people might be quick to say that it is not just. But listen to the words of Paul in **Romans 9:14-18**. **"What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be! (15) For He says to Moses, 'I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.' (16) So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy. (17) For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, 'For this very purpose I raised you up, to demonstrate My power in you, and that My name might be proclaimed throughout the whole earth.' (18) So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires."**

God is sovereign in all matters, even including matters of salvation, and this should not be a source of aggravation for us but rather a source of great comfort to those who love God and who are called according to His purpose.

God in His sovereignty is not acting capriciously from His throne in heaven. He is rather working out His eternal redemptive purposes in each and everything that we are presently experiencing. And this brings us back to our text.

So, why did God blind the eyes and harden the hearts of the Jews? What did **John 12:40** say? **"He has blinded their eyes, and He hardened their heart; lest they see with their eyes, and perceive with their heart, and be converted, and I heal them."** God blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts so that Christ, His sacrificial lamb, might through His death on the cross take away the sin of the world. And this certainly would not have taken place if God had not blinded the eyes and hardened the heart of the Jewish nation. If God had not blinded the eyes and hardened the hearts of the Jewish nation, they might have very well embraced Jesus as their Messiah. But thankfully, according to God's eternal redemptive plan, they didn't embrace Him and He went to the cross just as His Father had planned.

So, it seems pretty clear that God in His sovereignty opens eyes and closes eyes, opens hearts and closes hearts to achieve His eternal redemptive purposes. So, how can we know whether or not God has chosen to open our heart to salvation? How can we know whether we are one of God's chosen or not one of God's chosen?

We can know whether or not God has chosen to open our heart to salvation when our profession of faith produces works (James 2:14-20). In other words, when our lives are so radically changed, we and others who are viewing our lives, will know that we have been converted.

Let me read for you **James 2:14-20**. **"What use is it, my brethren, if a man says he has faith, but he has no works? Can that faith save him? (15) If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, (16) and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, be warmed and be filled,' and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? (17) Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself. (18) But someone may well say, 'You have faith, and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works.' (19) You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. (20) But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless?"**

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

Certainly the Bible teaches us that a person is saved by grace through faith, but it is not enough for us to simply say that we have faith, but rather we must actually possess a kind of faith that when it sees Christ, or in other words the glory of Christ, it produces works. Let us read **John 12:41**.

"These things Isaiah said [about how God had blinded the eyes of the Jews, and had hardened the hearts of the Jews], because he saw His glory, and he spoke of Him."

Whose glory had Isaiah seen? John is clearly telling us, based on John 12:41, that Isaiah had seen the glory of Christ. When had Isaiah seen the glory of Christ?

Isaiah had seen the glory of Christ when he saw the Lord sitting on His throne in Isaiah 6:1-3. Let me read for you **Isaiah 6:1-3** and Isaiah's description of the glory that He saw. **"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.'"**

And what was Isaiah's response to what He had seen? Isaiah's response to what he had seen was to become Christ's messenger (John 12:41). Isn't this exactly what the apostle tells us in **John 12:41**? What did he say? **"These things Isaiah said, because he saw His glory, and he spoke of Him."**

Isaiah's willingness to become Christ's messenger, after witnessing the glory of Christ, confirmed that His faith was truly saving. Isaiah had saving faith. We know that he had saving faith, because when he looked upon Jesus with the faith that had been given to him by God, it produced works.

But not everyone who had the opportunity to see the glory of Christ was like Isaiah. Let us go on to read **John 12:42-43**. **"Nevertheless many even of the rulers believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they were not confessing Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; (43) for they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God."** John tells us that they believed. But they did not possess saving faith. They merely possessed an intellectual faith.

These many so-called Jewish believers in **John 12:42**, who had witnessed the glory of Christ through His miracles, were unwilling to confess Him before men. They possessed a superficial faith.

If there is any question about the superficiality of their so-called faith, all we have to do is consider what John told us about what was most important to them.

What did John tell us? He told us that they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God.

Is this a serious thing to place men and what we might receive or not receive from them above God? Absolutely!

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

Let me read for you **John 5:44**. "**How can you believe** [how can you genuinely, truly, in a saving sense believe], **when you receive glory from one another, and you do not seek the glory that is from the one and only God?** We cannot have it both ways. We cannot bow before God and bow before men at the same time. It is one or the other. These so-called believers in **John 12:42-43** did not understand this, and they therefore certainly did not possess genuine living saving faith. If they had they would have changed the way they were living their lives.

The unwillingness of so many so-called Jewish believers in John 12:42-43 to become messengers of Christ, in spite of having seen His glory, confirmed that their faith was spurious (John 5:44).

Jesus in **John 12** had come into Jerusalem to the cries, "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. Even the king of Israel." But within a few days the king of Israel, the Jewish Messiah, will have been crucified.

How could this be? John helps us to understand how this could be by giving us a few facts about Jewish unbelief. The first fact about Jewish unbelief is that they dismissed the evidence (John 12:37). The second fact about Jewish unbelief is that the unbelief of so many Jews, in spite of the evidence, fulfills prophecy (John 12:38). The third fact about Jewish unbelief in the time of Christ is that God was its ultimate cause (John 12:39-40).

But even though this was true, it is also true that when God opens our eyes and softens our hearts so that we can view the glory of Christ through the eyes of faith, it will make a difference in our lives. It made a difference in Isaiah's life. Those who knew Isaiah and witnessed his life knew that He had been converted. And one of those differences that they would have seen was His willingness, in spite of the response of others, to be His witness. Nothing should have changed today.

Those who have been touched by God and are able to view the glory of Christ with eyes of faith will desire to become His messengers.