

**The Word Became Flesh**  
**Week 38**  
**John 12:37-50 (CSB)**  
**“Unbelief”**

**Introduction**

After making one final plea with the crowds in Jerusalem to walk in the light (believe in Him) while there was still time, Jesus hid Himself from the people. John tells us that the unbelief of many still persisted even after all the miraculous signs that Jesus had performed in their presence. Recorded for us in the four gospels, there are at least 36 specific miracles that Jesus had wrought as proof to His deity. And the gospel writers have also told us that He performed many other signs that had not been recorded in their writings. The nation of Israel was given more than enough evidence to believe in Him, and yet as a whole their unbelief had persisted.

In verses 37-50 in this chapter, the Greek word for belief (*pisteuo*) is used eight times. John wanted to emphasize the importance of faith in Christ in order to receive forgiveness and salvation. And he explains why it is that his fellow countrymen as a whole had rejected this saving faith. It was not for lack of evidence that the people had chosen to walk away from Christ. No, that was hardly the case. The truth was much simpler. They had rejected the message of Christ because they did not want it. And even those who had believed were afraid to take a stand for Him because of the consequences of their decision. For the Pharisees had threatened to throw anyone claiming that Jesus was the Messiah out of the Synagogue (John 9:22).

There are many reasons why people through the ages have refused to believe in Jesus. And to be quite honest, I believe that very few of them have anything to do with a lack of evidence. For the most part, people reject the Savior simply because they do not want Him. Simple as that. I believe that the most poignant word in this particular passage is the Greek word “*atheteo*”. Jesus uses this word in verse 48 of the text.

***The one who rejects (*atheteo*) me and doesn't receive my sayings has this as his judge: The word I have spoken will judge him on the last day.***

**John 12:48**

The word “*atheteo*” simply means “*to count as worthless*”. And this is exactly what multitudes in this world have been doing for centuries. Think about the effect that this will have on God The Father. He sent His only Son into the world in order to save it, and by and large, the world has regarded Him, and His message, as worthless. Do you not think there will be a terrible price to pay for this wickedness? The book of *Hebrews* offers a strong warning regarding this world's disdain for The Son of God.

***How much worse punishment do you think one will deserve who has trampled on The Son of God, who has regarded as profane the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace?***

**Hebrews 10:29**

To disregard The LORD Jesus is a terrible sin indeed. And here in this last portion of John 12, as Jesus withdraws His presence from the rejecting crowd, we see that a day of judgment is coming for the unbeliever. There are three components of this passage that I wish to share with you today. We will see the people's original **Unbelief**, which led to their being **Unable to Believe**, and as a result they would remain **Unforgiven** in the sight of a holy and just God.

**Unbelief (vs. 38)**

**Even though he had performed so many signs in their presence, they did not believe in Him. This was to fulfill the word of Isaiah the prophet, who said:**

Lord, who has believed our message?

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

**John 12:37-38**

As John points out, in spite of all the signs offered by Jesus as proof of His divinity, the people **chose** to reject Him. Why would they do such a thing? There are many different reasons. For the rulers in the Sanhedrin, it was a matter of self-preservation. They simply did not want to give up their positions of wealth, power and privilege. They had managed to carve out a pretty comfortable niche for themselves under the Roman occupation. They could not have cared less about how the common people were faring. For them, life was pretty good. And they saw Jesus as a threat to all that they had. So their reason for rejecting The Son of God was simply rooted in their own selfishness. Many people today, forsake Him for the same basic reason. They love their sinful pleasures too much to deny themselves and follow Christ.

For the common people, however, their reasoning was a bit different. Unlike the Pharisees, the common people in Jesus' day didn't have it so good. They were under the boot of Roman oppression. They felt like outcasts in their own country. They wanted a Moses style deliverer. And they wanted Him immediately. This explains why they had shouted with such desperate fervor just a few days prior, "Hosannah," meaning "save now". They weren't the least bit interested in a Savior Who could forgive their sin and offer them eternal life in heaven. They wanted one Who could deliver a better life in the here and now. As soon as Jesus spoke of laying down His life on the cross, they no longer cared about what He had to say. The mob, as a whole, had discounted Him as worthless. He wasn't what *they* wanted and they could not have cared less regarding what *God* wanted.

There is a whole host of reasons why the people of this world reject the message of Christ. But when they are all boiled down, the underlying reality beneath it all is best described with a single word: **SELF**. This is why Jesus message of "denying to self and following Him" is often counted as worthless. This world longs for a "god" who serves *them*. By and large very few are all that interested in being a servant of The Living God.

As John continues, he reminds his readers that this fact has come as no surprise to God. For the prophet Isaiah had predicted this centuries ago. The **53rd Chapter of Isaiah** contains the prophecy of how God's chosen Messiah would be rejected by His own people and crucified. The narrative begins with a simple question:

**"Who has believed what we have heard?"**

**Isaiah 53:1**

God knew all along that His Son would be despised and rejected (**Isaiah 53:3**), and yet, He sent Him to save us from sin anyway. In fact, this was the plan all along. Jesus came to die. His death would offer forgiveness and everlasting life to any who would place their faith in Him. And this plan had been formulated in heaven, even before the world began (**Revelation 13:8**). Those who knew The Word of God should have seen these truths and believed, but instead, they rejected The Son of God, considering Him to be worthless! Simply because He did not offer to do for them the things which they had desired of The Messiah, they **CHOSE** not to believe in Him. The consequences of this foolish choice are catastrophic.

**Unable to Believe (vs. 39-40)**

***This is why they were unable to believe, because Isaiah also said:***

*He has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts, so that they would not see with their eyes or understand with their hearts, and turn, and I would heal them.*

***Isaiah said these things because he saw His glory and spoke about Him. vs. 39-40***

It is important for us to understand the progression illustrated in this passage. First, the people refused to believe in Christ, based upon their own personal selfish decisions. But after this rejection, God hardened their hearts, rendering them unable to believe. For you see, God takes the rejection of His offer of grace very seriously. If His efforts to reach us are repeatedly rebuffed, then He will make it impossible for us to come to Him for forgiveness.

Many people have a hard time accepting this truth, but make no mistake, God is offended by our unwillingness to believe, and therefore, at some point He will in essence say to the stubborn unbeliever, "Have it your way." This is a Biblical principal dating all the way back to the book of *Exodus*. When God sent Moses to deliver His people from bondage, He warned Moses that Pharaoh's heart would be hardened (***Exodus 7:3***). A careful study of the *Exodus* will show that ten times, Pharaoh hardened his own heart and refused to let the Israelites leave Egypt. After this, we see that for an additional ten times, it was God Who hardened Pharaoh's heart. Pharaoh had his chance, but after a time, God saw to it that he was given no additional chances. God also knew from the beginning that Pharaoh would refuse to accept the message of Moses. Nothing catches God by surprise. So Pharaoh's doom was sealed from the very beginning. God knew the outcome before the conflict had even begun!

This same reality is true for those who reject (count as worthless) The Son of God, Who like Moses was sent into the world to deliver us from bondage. When we choose to reject His Words over and over again, we should not be surprised, when God takes away our ability to ever come to faith. A holy and righteous God is offended by our unbelief.

Notice that John first quotes the passage from ***Isaiah 53*** saying; ***"Who has believed our message?"*** And then after this he goes to ***Isaiah 6***, which speaks of God hardening the hearts of those who refuse to hear His Word. There is a reason that the order of these two passages is given in this manner. First, the unbeliever chooses not to believe, and then after a time, God makes it so that he cannot believe. This is why it is so very important to, as Jesus put it, ***"Believe in the light while we still have the light"*** (***John 12:35-36***). For you do not know when God will give up on you, if you continuously refuse His offer of forgiveness and salvation. So if you are stubbornly refusing to believe in Jesus today, take this warning seriously, for you may never get another chance!

***"Seek The LORD while He may be found; call to Him while He is near."*** ***Isaiah 55:6***

**Unforgiven (vs.42-50)**

***Nevertheless, many did believe in Him even among the rulers, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, so that they would not be banned from the synagogue. For they loved human praise more than praise from God. Jesus cried out, "The one who believes in Me believes not in Me, but in Him who sent Me. And the one who sees Me sees Him Who sent Me. I have come as Light into the world, so that everyone who believes in Me would not remain in darkness. If anyone hears My words and doesn't keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the***

**world but to save the world. The one who rejects Me and doesn't receive My sayings has this as his judge: The word I have spoken will judge him on the last day. For I have not spoken on My own, but the Father Himself Who sent Me has given Me a command to say everything I have said. I know that His command is eternal life. So the things that I speak, I speak just as the Father has told Me."**

What a stinging indictment upon those members of the Sanhedrin who believed in Jesus, but were afraid to acknowledge Him publicly, because they feared what the ruling council would do to them. *The Bible* says these religious leaders, **"loved the praise of men more than the praise of God."** I really can't imagine a worse pronouncement from the throne of heaven!

We know of two such men, who were on the council at the time; Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea. There may well have been several others. But obviously, God was not ready to write these men off. For later, they would in fact take a stand for their LORD, as they returned to publicly claim His body when He was crucified. Not only that, but we also know that many priests would leave their positions in Jerusalem in order to follow Christ after His resurrection (**Acts 6:7**). Again, God has always known who will believe and who will not.

Jesus declared once more that He is The Light of The World, and those who believe in Him would be delivered from the darkness. But He went on to say that any who reject Him (*atheteo vs. 48*) will be subject to judgment. He even goes on to say how these non-believers will be judged. They will be judged by The Word of God. This means that rather than have their sins washed away, they will instead be judged according to their own works juxtaposed against the Law of God. And the horrible reality of this statement is that no one will be able to withstand this scrutiny!

According to the Word of God, anyone who breaks one single law will be considered guilty of all of them.

**For whoever keeps the entire Law, and yet stumbles at one point, is guilty of breaking it all.** **James 2:10**

This simply means that in order to stand before God and be declared righteous, a person either must have lived a sinlessly perfect life, OR, have placed their complete trust in Someone Who lived a sinlessly perfect life in their stead. His Name my friends is Jesus, and without a saving faith in Him, you are unforgiven, and the wrath of God remains upon you (**John 3:36**).

Have you ever told a lie? Then according to the judgement of the Ten Commandments, you are a liar. Have you ever looked at another person with lust? Then according to the Word of Christ, you have broken the seventh commandment by committing adultery in your heart. Have you ever stolen anything, even something very small? Then you have broken the eighth commandment. Have you ever wanted something that another person had? Then you have broken the tenth commandment. And if any of us had to stand before a Holy God, based upon these criteria, ALL would be guilty. For the *Bible* says:

**But the cowards, faithless, detestable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars — their share will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.** **Revelation 21:8**

So what is our only hope? It is to believe in the Name of Christ Jesus and be delivered from the coming wrath. Do not count Him as worthless today, but rather believe in Him. Come to the light while there is still time, for you know not when the offer will be rescinded, and Christ will hide Himself... from **you**. You are not guaranteed another chance to believe. So seek Him while He may be found!

**And let the believers say... TRUTH!!!**