

UPPER ROOM ADULT BIBLE STUDY
"The Gospel of John"
Pastor Jim Otte
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Lesson 50: John 12:37-13:17

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?"

- a. "they still did not believe in Him," – the last ditch efforts of Jesus to turn the hearts of the Jewish religious leaders to faith in Him – had failed. The prophet Isaiah had experienced the same rejection of God's Word in the Old Testament!
- b. "to whom the arm of the Lord has been revealed?" – God had revealed Himself to those He loved, through His promises and deliverance. Yet the children of Israel persistently turned to the false gods of the pagan cultures of Baal, the Egyptian gods, and the gods of Babylon and the Persians.

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.

- a. "Therefore they could not believe." – Isaiah concluded that those who had rejected God were incapable of belief – so much had they hardened their hearts against God. This indicates the power of free will; that people can literally see and benefit from God's workings, but refuse to believe and instead turn to other gods.

a. **Romans 1:18-23.** *For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. ¹⁹ For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. ²⁰ For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world,^[a] in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. ²¹ For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. ²² Claiming to be wise, they became fools, ²³ and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.*

- b. **"He has blinded their eyes"** – when people harden their hearts, God in turn, "blinds" them – keeping them from seeing God's mercy and experiencing God's compassion. The ultimate human question, of course, is why would God do that? And, of course, would a believer have to worry about that happening to him/her?
- c. **"Isaiah...saw His glory and spoke of Him."** – the answer to those worrisome questions is God is ultimately driven by His desire for all people to come to Him. Some people choose to take the hard path or learning of God's mercy the hard way (see the Prodigal Son story in Luke 15). Other people take the easier path of simply believing as a child believes. A believer does not have to worry about his/her heart hardening, because they stay in the Word, where the Holy Spirit consoles and encourages faith to grow.

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.

- a. **"many even of the authorities believed"** – as John had reported, there were many who saw through the Pharisees' agenda to deny Jesus. They believed.
- b. **"but for fear of the Pharisees, they did not confess it"** – their fear of losing stature in their synagogue, and perhaps other forms of persecution, weakened their desire to make a public stand for Jesus.
- c. **"for they loved the glory...from man"** – loving the glory from man can take two forms:
 - a. Not being willing to sacrifice the popularity and status, which came from being a part of the Jewish religious group; being thought of as a "good Jew" (or Lutheran?).
 - b. Not being willing to suffer direct persecution (harm, depravity, loss of business, etc.) as a result of publicly aligning with Jesus.
 - i. In today's climate, the racial rage is going after anything, which is claimed to be "racist," including Christian images. Publicly aligning with Jesus may have consequences we never dreamed we would see in America in our lifetimes!
- d. **Important to Note**: John does not claim, that those who feared the loss of glory or the wrath of the Pharisees, had lost their faith or had rejected Jesus. He is merely pointing out that faith in Jesus would eventually result in choices of walking by faith, not by sight! A weak faith, was FAITH, nonetheless!

⁴⁴ And Jesus cried out and said, **"Whoever believes in me, believes not in me but in him who sent me. ⁴⁵ And whoever sees me sees him who sent me. ⁴⁶ I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness.**

- a. **"whoever sees Me, sees Him"** – belief in Jesus gives the believer a new set of eyes; a new lens, through which to see God at work, even when others around them do not (and cannot) see. The ability to "see" God at work is the source of hope out of despair; and faith out of futility.

