

The Day the Light Went Out

Scripture: John 12:35-50

Code: 1539

Turn, this morning, in your Bibles, please, with me to the twelfth chapter of John's gospel. And after two weeks away from John, we are going to continue in our study. For our visitors, we would like to say that we are in a study of the gospel of John, verse by verse, as we move through and John's gospel presents to us the deity of Jesus Christ. It emphasizes His...it emphasizes His divine essence, His divine nature, as opposed particularly to His humanity. John's concern is the deity of Christ.

As we come to chapter 12 and the portion that's before us today, we come to the absolute end of the public ministry of Jesus. This is the conclusion of Jesus' appeal to Israel and from now on following what we shall see today, He deals only with those who already know Him and love Him even up to His death and following His resurrection.

How long have you heard the truth and refused to believe? That's an important question. It's important because the Bible says that God said, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man." And God meant it when He said it because after He said it the Flood came and drowned man. And later, Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed and then Babylon fell and then Rome and so on and so on and so on until finally God's going to destroy the entire world. God does not endlessly strive with man. There comes a time when grace is over, when it ends and judgment begins.

Now in our text today we have a summary, in a sense, of all the public ministry of Jesus. It begins as Jesus cries out with a last public appeal, His final invitation to Israel. And then He disappears and John then explains Israel's unbelief and the results of Israel's unbelief. This passage then wraps up Messiah's call to Israel. And from now on, as I said, He shares His hours before His death and after His resurrection with those who are His own, His own disciples, His own followers who loved Him.

Tragically, the unbelief of Israel has hardened into permanency and the call of Messiah is refused and so the call is silenced by God. Jesus Christ had come into this world born of a virgin, God in human flesh. He lived quietly in humility among men at Nazareth. Then after those 30 rather obscure years, He announced to Israel that He was God, that He was the living Christ, that He was the living water, that He was the bread of life, the light of the world, the good Shepherd, the resurrection and the life. And He offered to men a spiritual Kingdom based on repentance and faith and men refused it. He substantiated all of His claims by marvelous miracles, by matchless words, by a patient intense and all-surpassing love. And still men refused. He offered to men forgiveness and love and grace and

peace and praise and hope and blessing and abundant life and joy and eternal life and all other things that were possible in the goodness of God, and men still refused. They doubted Him. They denied Him. They resented Him. They hated Him. They tried to kill Him. They plotted His execution. And finally they executed Him by crucifixion. And the astute comment of Pilate, the universal coward, was this, "I find no fault in this man." That probably is the greatest comment ever made by a single man on the life of Jesus Christ, "I find no fault in Him." And then he said, "I am innocent of the blood of this just man." And the people cried, "His blood be upon us," and it was.

The pure, lovely, sinless, all-loving Jesus Christ, the Messiah of God, water, bread, life, the Shepherd was rejected, hated and then killed. And as we come to our passage today in chapter 12, He is about to reign from a cross. It is only a matter of hours at this point before He dies. Yet almost in a kind of relentless love before Jesus leaves, He makes one last final plea, one final invitation. And as we look at our verses, we're going to see, first of all, the final call that Jesus made to Israel. Then we're going to see the fatal causes of Israel's unbelief, and lastly, the forever consequences of faith or unbelief.

First of all, let's notice the final call to belief, the last call that Jesus ever gave to Israel. Verse 35 and 36 give it to us. Now before we look at the verse, just keep in mind that Jesus had just ridden into the city earlier in the week and they had hailed Him as a King. But when He began to talk about dying, He began to talk about His death, all of a sudden their hopes were shattered and He committed what was really the last straw when He said He was going to die because a dead Messiah was absolutely ridiculous to them. They couldn't conceive of a dead Messiah. So finally in verse 34 they closed their thoughts by saying at the end of it, "Who is this Son of Man? You're not the one prophesied in the Old Testament, who are You? God promised us a living Messiah, a living King, You claim You're going to die. You're not the Messiah of the Old Testament."

And so, the last straw, a dead Messiah, gave them the opportunity to render their final verdict that Jesus was an imposter worthy of one thing, and that was death. But Jesus still in persistent and intense love gives them one more invitation. And it's a kind of a last cry, it's not time to discuss anymore, it's not time for dialogue, it's time to cry out and press home the warning. And that's what He does in verse 35, notice it.

"Then Jesus said unto them, 'Yet a little while is the light with you.'" Of course He's referring to Himself who is the light. "Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you, for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not where he goeth. While ye have light, believe in the light that ye may be the sons of light, or the children of light."

Now that's Jesus' final appeal and He says the day of grace is passing. You only have a little while, He says, believe while you have the time. He had preached among them. He had kept His ministry to the boundaries of the land that God had appointed. He had never ministered outside of the land of

Israel at all in His whole life. And now only hours remained and the light would be gone and Israel would be in a darkness that's still going on today, almost two thousand years later. And the light of Messiah would have come and gone and Israel would have missed the thing they were looking most for through all their history, the Messiah. Jesus says, notice it in verse 35, "Just a little while," the time of His death must have seemed to Him just a breath away.

He used that phrase, "a little while," several times. In chapter 7, I think it's verse 33, it says there, "Then said Jesus unto them, 'Yet a little while am I with you and then I go unto Him that sent Me.'" In other words, because Jesus Christ had an infinite mind and because He had a mind that could conceive of eternity, time was but a speck, and a little speck of time was but a speck within a speck. And indeed it was, just a little while to that infinite mind.

Over in chapter 13 verse 33 He tells us again of the consciousness of the "little while." He says, "Little children, yet a little while am I with you." And then over in verse 19 of chapter 14, "Yet a little while and the world seeth Me no more." Then over in chapter 16 verse 16, "A little while and ye shall not see Me." He was conscious that a small amount of time remained when men could hear and respond to Jesus Christ, both unregenerate men and His own disciples who had only a few days, few hours to gain solid faith. And so it's but a little while. The light is going out in a moment. And Jesus cries in chapter 12, "O Israel, believe while the light is here." The day of salvation was coming to an end. The sun was beginning to set and it would be all over.

There's a beautiful thought in this. Notice that it says in verse 35, "Yet a little while is the light with you, walk while you have the light." Then later it says, "He that walketh in darkness knoweth not where He goeth." The idea of walking brings to our mind an interesting thing. In those days men went places on foot. They walked wherever they had to go. And one of the problems of walking places was that you couldn't walk at night because you couldn't see. And so whatever journey wanted to be consummated would have to be consummated in the light. And when the sun began to set, the man who was making a journey would have to stop his business, stop, resting or doing whatever he was doing, and begin to hasten to walk before night came and that's essentially what Jesus is saying. Take the walk of faith before the daylight ends, and then you're left groping around in some kind of permanent darkness. The idea of walk means believe. Make the journey of faith while it's still light, before the darkness falls because when once the light of the world is no longer present, then the unbelieving people are going to be like travelers, lost in a darkness of a starless moonless night. And that's how it is. And so, Jesus urges them to walk the walk of faith while it's still light and while they can still see.

He said to them back in chapter 8 and verse 21 those tragic words, "I go My way and you shall seek Me and shall die in your sins. Where I go you cannot come." Verse 24, "I said therefore unto you that you shall die in your sins for if you believe not that I am He, you shall die in your sins." Jesus warned them three times in those two verses that they were going to die in their sins if they didn't do

something before Jesus left because He would go to a place where they could never come. There us an urgency in the voice of Christ at this time. This is it. This is final. Jesus is the light and He's only got a few hours left and then darkness. And the darkness of fear and the darkness of sin and the darkness of guilt and the darkness of loneliness will be permanent when He's gone.

Some people might say, "Well, it's too bad about Israel. It's a good thing for us though because there's no pressure on us, we can come whenever we want. The light's always around." I hate to tell you, but it isn't. God's Spirit does not always strive with you either. There may come a time when you've heard it so many times, when it's been through your brain so many times, when you've rejected so many times and hardened your heart so many times and refused Jesus Christ so many times that God stops calling you all together and it's all over with. Jesus said, "No man cometh unto Me except the Father...do what?...draws him." And if God ever stops drawing, it becomes impossible to come to Jesus Christ. Grace passes, my friend, grace passes. It passed for the world of Noah's time. It passed for Israel. It passed for nations throughout the Old Testament. And it can pass for an individual in our world today.

Let me show you some illustrations. In Nehemiah in that most interesting book, chapter 9 it tells us in verse 30 some interesting words. "Yet many years didst thou forebear them and testifieth against them by Thy Spirit and Thy prophets." In other words, God for many years gave testimony and warning to Israel. "Yet would they not listen." Now listen to this, "Therefore gavest Thou them into the hand of the people of the lands." There came a time when God said, "All right, Israel, I've had it. That's all I'm going to take," and turned them over to judgment. God has done it many, many, many times. Hosea records something that perhaps is parallel to that. In the fourth chapter of Hosea and the seventeenth verse, a shocking statement, listen to this, "Ephraim," and that's the name for Israel used here, "Ephraim is joined to idols." Now the next statement is shocking, three words. "Let him alone." Did you get that? Israel went after idols, God said let them alone, no grace there, my friend, God just cut it off, that's it. That's their choice. That's all. I'm through even dealing with them.

In Isaiah chapter 63 and verse 10 we read something that is again similar. "But they rebelled...Israel...and vexed His Holy Spirit," talking about God, now listen to this shocking statement again, "therefore God was turned to be their enemy and He fought against them." God is not only passive when grace is done, God is active against the man. That's a frightening, sobering thought.

You say, "Yeah, but that's all Old Testament stuff." All right, let me show you some New Testament stuff. Acts 7 verse 51, "Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Spirit as your fathers did, so do ye." Now you think God's going to tolerate it any more of Israel? He didn't, did He? He ended their day of grace. In Romans chapter 1 you have three times this statement, "God gave them up...God gave them up...God gave them over to a reprobate mind." God looked down in Romans 1 on a godless world, a sinful world and God looked at individuals who are

committing sin and God gave them up. He let them go.

But perhaps the most shocking passage of all appears in Hebrews chapter 10. And this is New Testament truth. Verse 26, just listen to this. "For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin." In other words, if you have heard the truth of Jesus Christ and have repeatedly said no, and repeatedly refused the only one sacrifice for sin, which is Jesus Christ, then there is no more sacrifice. If you willfully after hearing of Christ knowing the facts refuse Him, you're hopeless. Now listen to this next verse. "But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries." All you have left is that. There's no sacrifice for sin, the only thing left is a devouring on the part of God. Verse 29, "Of how much sorer punishment suppose ye?" Talk about degrees of punishment. Yes there are degrees of punishment and the severe punishment goes to the one who knows and continues to reject. "How much sorer punishment suppose ye shall he be thought worthy who hath trodden underfoot the Son of God, hath counted the blood of the covenant with which He was sanctified an unholy thing, and hath done despite under the Spirit of grace?" How much more serious is God's judgment against somebody who knows the truth, who knows it and knows it and knows it and refuses it? Verse 30, "Vengeance belongeth unto Me, I will recompense, says the Lord." Then the next verse says this, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

When a man repeatedly rejects the salvation offered in Jesus Christ, he sets himself up for the vengeance and judgment of an angry God. It's a very serious thing. Grace ends and God gives men up and nations after they have hardened their hearts against Him.

So, as we look at John 12 we see that Jesus is warning Israel. And God still warns men today that you can go beyond the call of grace. And knowing that you can do that, I say this to you. If your heart is at all sensitive to God, if there's any kind of sensitivity to God in your heart anywhere, and if you can feel in the least the pull of God toward Jesus Christ and you have the least desire to come to Jesus Christ, then come before the light goes out and permanent darkness is reserved for you. While Christ is in your midst, while the truth of salvation is being spoken while you can believe, then exercise saving faith and believe and the Bible says in verse 35, "When you do believe," pardon me, verse 36, "You do believe, you will become a son of light." Sons of light. That's a beautiful phrase. It means "little lights." We actually radiate then the light of God. When a man believes in Jesus Christ and receives Him, the light of truth and the light of God so floods his whole life that he becomes himself luminous and we reflect like the moon the light of God. All over the New Testament we are called light. The world is in darkness, 2 Corinthians 4:3 and 4 tells us the god of this world has blinded the minds of those who believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel should shine unto them. Men are in darkness. Men who come to Jesus Christ become children of light, sons of light, little lights reflecting the very light of God.

In fact, in Matthew chapter 5 verse 13 it instructs us a little bit about what to do with our light. "You're the salt of the earth but if the salt has lost its savor, with what shall it be salted? It is thereafter good for nothing, but to be cast out and trodden under the foot of men...listen to this...ye are the light of the world, a city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden, neither do men put a lamp...or light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a lampstand and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is heaven." We literally radiate God's glory. We not only receive light, we diffuse it. The light of understanding and knowledge and hope and love all that God means is embodied in the transfer of light which becomes ours by faith in Christ.

So there's the invitation. A simple one. A final call to the people of Israel and all men to believe while they can believe, while they have the light before God removes the light. In 2 Corinthians chapter 6 and verse 2 we read this, "I have heard thee in a time accepted and in the day of salvation have I helped thee, behold, now is the accepted time. Behold, now is the day of salvation." Tremendous words. The time to come to Jesus Christ is today, now, while God's grace is still extended to you because there may come a time when God's grace is no longer extended. And so, Jesus warns Israel and then comes the frightening statement at the end of verse 36. This is the climax to all the...all the ministry of Jesus in Israel. Listen to what it says. "These things spoke Jesus and...what's the next word?...departed and did hide Himself from them."

Boy, what a tragic verse. The end of all the ministry of Jesus Christ was leaving, that's all. He just left. He departed. And they went to the temple the next day, Luke tells us, and they waited for Him but He never showed. He never came. It was over. It was over. It wasn't just a cloud veiling the sun, the sun had set. That was it. Grace was done. And His words became true. Oh how true they became. "You shall seek Me and shall not find Me and where I go you can never come."

So the verdict was in on Israel. Their Messiah had come. Their Messiah had gone. And except for a few faithful souls, Israel did not believe. They saw all the evidence and they decided that Christ should be executed. He couldn't be their Messiah.

And so, Jesus is finished. Now beginning in verse 37 and through the rest of this little section which we'll look at very rapidly, John in retrospect goes over the ministry of Jesus. Jesus doesn't speak anymore. Even though there are some statements made by Jesus, John is recalling them in kind of a recap or a summary of Jesus' ministry. The rest of this chapter is John speaking, reiterating the words of Christ. You'll hear nothing new, nothing that we haven't studied in detail before, John just recaps it all as kind of a final summary of Jesus' message to Israel. And in John's words we have these two final ideas, the fatal causes of unbelief and the forever consequences of belief and unbelief.

As we come to verse 37 then we come to the fatal causes of unbelief. Why was it that Israel didn't believe? And here we're going to get into the absolute mysteries of theology, so hang on to your hat. From verse 37 to 43 is heavy, very, very heavy and people have done real theological cartwheels trying to get through this passage. We'll just go through it like it was no problem at all. We hope you won't even realize there are problems there.

All right, so as we come to the fatal causes of unbelief, we're going to see why didn't Israel believe? If Messiah was so good, and it was so legitimate and His miracles were so obvious, even an idiot would believe, it appears. Why would not Israel believe? What was the problem?

And it's an interesting thing, kind of a footnote before we look at verse 37, that some people have felt that the rejection of Jesus Christ by the Jews throws great suspicion on the truth of His claims. In other words, maybe Christianity is just faking it. I mean, it seems rather obvious that intelligent, religious people like the Jews would believe in a series of miracles like we claim Jesus did. It seems ridiculous that a whole nation of people would reject such obvious proof. And so many critics have said, "Well, the evidence really wasn't that great. A lot of the miracles didn't really happen. Some scribes put them in there and they're really just myths. They're fantasies."

Now that might be a natural assumption on the part of a natural man who doesn't understand the things of God. He might assume that what we need to do in the Bible is sort of get rid of all the myth and all the fantasy and get down to the truth. And so John wants us to be aware of this. He wants to remind us that the miracles of Jesus were legitimate. That Israel has absolutely no excuse for unbelief. The miracles actually did happen. And that's what he reminds us in verse 37. "But though He had done so many miracles...where?...before them, yet they believed not on Him."

It wasn't that the miracles were fake, it was that He did them and still they believed not. Those miracles were legitimate. He had healed the sick. He had expelled demons. He had controlled the forces of nature, the wind and the sea. He had walked on the water. He had turned the water into wine. He had healed men of all kinds of diseases. He had revealed to men their secret thoughts. He had raised the dead. He had done all these things right in front of them. They were legitimate. They did happen. There was historical evidence. It wasn't a question of that, it was a question of their depth of unbelief.

His miracles were done openly in the light of daylight before as many witnesses that wanted to gather around. And they were done in profusion, hundreds of miracles that He must have done. And when it tells us they didn't believe, that is not to disparage the miracles of Jesus, that is to show you the infinite depths of human depravity. The blindness of sin, the god of this world has blinded the minds of those who believe not. It's not that the facts aren't there, it's that Satan has blinded men. Men

have hardened their hearts. And you'll see as we go down in the passage in verse 43 that the problem was they knew what they wanted, they knew Christ's miracles happened, but they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God. They made their choice in their unbelief.

And men today are in the same boat. You find men today refusing Jesus Christ. That doesn't mean that Jesus Christ isn't for real. You go out and preach Christ and you don't see much response, you don't say, "Ah, maybe Christ isn't for real." You say, "Look at the hardness and the depth of sin in the hearts of men." That's the problem. If you're sitting here this morning and you've never given your heart and life to Jesus Christ, you don't need anymore evidence, my friend, you just need the shackles of your blindness and sin broken, that's the problem.

So, John carefully reminds us that the problem was not with Christ, the problem was with the callous, insensitive, hard hearts of men. But notice that John then gives two causes for unbelief in the following verses. And these are very, very difficult to understand for the natural mind. My reason does not understand these because we come right back to the absolute apparent paradox of sovereignty and free will. We're right back there again. Now mark it in verse 38 we see the first reason that men didn't believe, here it is, it was the plan of God. The first reason people didn't believe was because it was the plan of God.

Somebody might say, "Well, boy, it's really too bad about God, I mean God is a terrific guy, I mean, and He did a nice thing in making the world and had a good idea in sending Messiah. That was a terrific thought. And God is really a wonderful person. It's really too bad that poor God worked so hard and the people just refuse and the whole thing was blown. Poor God. Sent Messiah and it didn't work and God must be all frustrated and His plans all fouled up."

Want to know something? Give you a little statement, remember it. God is no man's victim ever. And these verses quickly dispel the theory that God lost control of Messiah. In fact, not only do they dispel it, they teach the opposite. John shows that the first cause of Israel's blindness was the plan of God. He designed this to be a part of it. This isn't an accident. Look at verse 38. Verse 37, the last five words, "They believed not on Him..." now watch this, "That the saying of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled." They didn't believe because God prophesied they wouldn't.

Now people have tried to soften that up. But that word "that" comes from a little particle in the Greek language and the word is *hina*, it's a *hina* clause, it's a purpose clause. And it means nothing other than purpose. That's exactly what it means. Let me read it that way. "They believed not on Him for the purpose of the saying of Isaiah the prophet to be fulfilled." It doesn't say "they believed and the saying was fulfilled." It says...it doesn't say, "They didn't believe and thus it was fulfilled," no. It says, "They didn't believe in order that it might be fulfilled." God designed in His plan of prophecy their unbelief. They believed not in order that it might be fulfilled. That's sovereignty, my friend. In order

that the divine moral order as decreed from eternity and described by Isaiah might be fulfilled, the Jewish people through their own fault failed to receive Christ in genuine faith and when they did that of their own choice, they were fulfilling the absolute plan of God prophesied in Isaiah. And, in fact, in verse 38 it records for us the very words of Isaiah in chapter 53, "Lord, who hath believed our report and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed." Who believed? Isaiah said in 53 when he's talking about Messiah in that whole chapter there, who is going to believe? And the implied answer is hardly anybody, and that's exactly what happened. And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? The arm of the Lord meaning His miracle, His power, His almighty power. And all the miracles, all the almightiness of Jesus Christ and who believed? Oh Isaiah prophesied to the letter they wouldn't believe, this is no accident. God designed it that way. The divine order demands that those who willfully hardened themselves shall be hardened. Pharaoh, for example, hardened his heart. You know what God did? God hardened it for him after that. In the seventh chapter of Exodus in verse 3 the prophecy goes like this, "God said, 'I will harden Pharaoh's heart.'"

Now you say, "Well that's ridiculous, God's going to go over there, make a bunch of plagues and then hardened Pharaoh's heart?"

Yeah, but you know how it happened? God said, "I will harden Pharaoh's heart." Then in chapter 8 verse 32 it says, "Pharaoh hardened his own heart first." And then later on in chapter 9 verse 12 it says, "Then God hardened his heart." In other words, first Pharaoh of his own choice hardened his heart, then God hardened it for him. And God prophesied pass the point of human will to the point of His own involvement, see. God could see the human hardening and then prophesy His own response. And God says toward Israel, "Nobody is going to believe." He is looking past His knowledge of their unbelief to His own judicial decree, leaving them in their unbelief. In other words, God said this is how it's going to be because they're going to refuse and thus I'm going to harden their hearts.

So it's a purpose clause. God says I am going to do it and He did it. But in between God's two sovereign acts, the prophecy of hardening, the act of God hardening, was the choice of Israel to refuse Christ. And He knew they'd do it. So ignorantly and blindly while they thought they were frustrating Jesus' plan, they were fulfilling prophecy to the very letter and, in fact, bringing about the salvation of the church because if Jesus hadn't died, we wouldn't be saved, right? God knew they would reject and God fit it into His master plan. The rejection of Israel provided two things. Number one, the death of Christ brought salvation. And number two, that salvation brought the church into existence. Blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in. Israel's partially blind in order that Gentiles might be saved.

In Acts 28 it tells us they didn't believe, they couldn't believe in order that God might redeem His church. And so, Israel was in the plan of God, even in their rejection. They didn't understand the

significance of what Jesus did but it didn't frustrate God's plan because God had designed His plan with that in mind.

Now in verse 39, "Therefore...this is strong language, friends...Therefore they could not believe." Why? "Because Isaiah said so." In other words, they were victims of God's sovereign plan and prophecy. They could not believe, now notice in verse 40 who's doing it, "He," not Satan. Satan's not blinding them here, no...no. Satan blinded them first, now God is judicially blinding them. "He hath blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts that they should not see with their eyes nor understand with their hearts and be converted and I shall heal them." Do you know that God did not allow the conversion of Israel? Shocking thought. That's a shocking thought. God actually hardened Israel's heart. Now that's a quote right out of Isaiah chapter 6 verses 9 and 10, that verse there. That's a prophecy clear back in the sixth chapter of Isaiah hundreds and hundreds of years before this ever happened, God prophesied Israel's hardness.

You say, "Well how does this work?" I'm not really sure. I'm not sure how the response of human will and divine sovereignty fit together but as best as I can explain it, let me give it to you like this. Israel through years of insensitivity to God, through years of rebellion, through years of misusing divine prerogatives, through years of forsaking divine instruction had inherited a moral impossibility that when the truth finally came, they couldn't believe it. They had clouded it up and messed it up for so many centuries that when the truth finally came, they were in no position to see it. What a frightening, frightening statement. Maybe I can show you the contrast by looking at verse 37. In verse 37, "They did not believe." In verse 39, "They...what?...could not believe." They had a history of unbelief that bred right into them a moral impossibility. They had long ago hardened themselves against God and now God hardened Israel so Israel could not believe and that's the sovereign side and yet at the same time every individual Jew was responsible for what he did with Messiah.

Listen, my friend, the terrible consequence of hardening ourselves against the warning of God is that God may some day stop His grace and judicially harden us. You say, "Boy, is God some kind of a monster." No. God is a God of love. He warns. He proclaims the good news of the gospel. He repeatedly states to men the consequence of their unbelief. He constantly cries out to men in love. He provides a sacrifice of sin. He urges them to walk in the light. Remember it, verse 35 Jesus begged them to walk in the light. But when men by their own decision and by refusing repeated warning reject Christ, then and only then God hardens them and those who are not willing to believe are not able to believe. They would not, so they could not. That's a tragedy. The harvest was past, the summer was ended, the sun had set and it was over. Mark it, my friend, it is an inviolable law of God that personal rejection becomes judicial hardening on the part of God. And Isaiah foretold every detail of it word for word.

Then in verse 41, "These things said Isaiah when he saw His glory and spoke of Him." Why did he say that? Why did John throw that in there? Because he wanted the people to know that that prophecy belonged attached to Jesus. The people might have thought...we might have thought, "Well, that didn't refer to Christ." So John throws in verse 41, "Oh yes it does, these things said Isaiah when he saw His glory." Who's? Christ's in Isaiah 6. "And spoke of Him." That prophecy does relate to what a man does with Jesus Christ.

So they had refused the light. Rejected the truth that God judicially hardened them. Boy, it's a solemn thing to remember what God did to Israel here. They're still hardened today, two thousand years later. But what God did to Israel there wasn't anything new for God, He did it in history before, didn't He? He did it to the pre-flood civilization, He did it in Sodom and Gomorrah, He did it again, and again, and again and He's going to do it another time in the great holocaust that comes at His return in the great flaming judgment of the Second Coming. And he may be doing it in your own life individually. God may judicially abandon you as an individual because of repeated refusals to receive His grace.

You see, that's what Isaiah meant in chapter 55 verse 6 when he said this, "Seek ye the Lord while He may be...what?...found. Call ye upon Him...what?...while He's near." It's one of God's laws that a man who will not believe may reach a point where he cannot believe. And that's a tragedy.

So the first fatal cause of unbelief is the activity of God's sovereign hardening of Israel prophesied in the Old Testament and designed by God to bring about salvation in the death of Christ and the building of His own church. You say, "Well, that's not fair for Israel. They're just a victim of God's sovereignty." No, because then he gives the other side of the coin. Here's the second cause of unbelief, not God's plan, but personal choice. Look at it in verse 42. "Nevertheless," isn't that an interesting word? Fantastic! "Nevertheless," what does that word mean? That means "Even in spite of the sovereignty of God..." Did you get that? Even though God had sovereignly blinded and hardened the nation Israel, nevertheless they were individuals. Here is free will on the part of man, choice, operating within the sovereignty of God. God's sovereignty over national Israel, yet individual choice. "Nevertheless, among the chief rulers also many...what?...believed on Him." You say, "Hey, terrific, a revival!" No. "But because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him lest they be put out of the synagogue for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God."

They weren't saved. They believed the facts but they refused it because they desired the praise of men. Now that's personal choice, my friend. That's the second reason why men don't believe. That's the second cause of unbelief, personal choice. Not only God's plan, but personal choice. And how those two go together, as I say, that's in the mind of God, not in my mind. But they didn't want to lose their prestigious position. They didn't want to lose their place in the synagogue. And after all, they had made the rules themselves back in chapter 9 verse 22, they said, "If anybody follows Christ,

we'll put them out of the synagogue." He loses all religious privileges. And so they were stuck with their own rules. They didn't want to do that and they loved the praise of men. They were in a popularity drive.

That's kind of a tragic choice, isn't it? It almost seems inane that any human being could make a choice like that and yet there are people probably sitting in this audience this morning who make that choice. They want the popularity of the world for a few years, rather than the honor of God forever. What a pathetic choice.

There are people like that. There are kids today who would rather have popularity rather than salvation. They'd rather do what everybody else is doing. They'd rather live the way the rest of the people are living. What kind of a reverse hypocrisy in our world. You know, the old hypocrite didn't have anything, but he faked it. Today we've got people who know the truth and they fake like they don't. Just the opposite. And so they want to strive to be like the world and do what the world does and drink with the world and carouse with the world and, you know, whatever the world's thing is. Live like the world lives so that the world is going to accept them, so they'll have a little popularity, a little prestige, little position in the world. One of the...one of the classier people in the world. And you know what they get? They get the honor of the world and the curse of God forever. Tragic choice.

I think you ought to trade in your popularity with the world for popularity with God. I don't think it's really too important whether the world thinks you're a swinger or not. Jesus said, "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose...what?...his own soul?" What's a man going to give in exchange for his soul? See, a man who seeks the world's honor is a living tragedy. James 4 and verse 4, listen to this, "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?" Here's the statement, listen, "Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." Want to be the enemy of God? Want to happen in your life what God did in Israel of old when He fought against them?

And so, two causes for unbelief...sovereign plan of God and personal choice. And so they would not believe and so they could not believe. And they chose the honor of men rather than the honor of God. It all boils down to this, choose whose honor you want. Whose do you want? You say, "Is God going to honor me if I receive Christ?" Look at verse 26 of chapter 12, "If any man serve Me, let him follow Me and where I am there shall also My servant be. If any man serve Me, him will My Father...what?...honor." Want the honor of God? I do. So there are the fatal causes of unbelief.

Finally, and just quickly because this is all review, the forever consequences of belief and unbelief. Now Jesus is departed and in this section this is not Jesus actually speaking, this is John bringing to recall many of the statements of Jesus. And what he does all through this is just give us the consequences of belief and unbelief. It's kind of a final recap, a final declaration of the importance of

Jesus Christ's ministry and the fatal error of disbelieving it.

Verse 44, for example. Jesus cried out, it's as if John is saying when Jesus was here, Jesus cried out and said, "He that believeth on Me believeth not on Me but on Him that sent Me." You can't believe in Jesus Christ without believing in God the Father, you can't believe in God the Father without believing in Jesus Christ. We covered that in three passages...5:24; 8:19; and 10:38, all three of those places the same message. The only way you'll ever know God is through Christ. The only way you'll ever know Christ is also to experience and know fully in the fullest sense the God who created the universe.

So what is the first result? The first forever consequence of belief? A personal knowledge of God and Christ. Tremendous, tremendous! Then verse 45, another consequence of belief, "He that seeth Me seeth Him that sent Me." Just kind of reiterating the first statement. It's a vision and an insight concerning God. You know, Hebrews 1 tells us that Christ is the expressed image of God's person. So when you know Christ, you know the God of the universe. That's the first consequence of belief. The first forever consequence is a permanent, forever knowledge of God.

Now there's some more consequences. Verse 46, "I am come a light into the world," you remember how He said that. "That whosoever believeth in Me should not abide in darkness." There's another consequence of belief, you're not in darkness, you're in light forever, eternal light.

Then he says in verse 47, here's another consequence, "If any man hear My words and believe not, I judge him not for I came not to judge the world but to save the world." That's a tremendous statement. Jesus said, "I am not come to condemn the world but that the world might be saved." Jesus didn't come as judge, He came as...what?...as Savior. He didn't come to judge the world, but if a man refuses Him, then that man assigns judgment to himself. John 3, "He is judged already because he has not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God." Jesus said, "I came to save. If men refuse Me, that's judgment. I didn't come to judge." Next time He comes, what does He come to do? Comes to judge. First time He came to save, if men refuse His salvation they receive His judgment. I didn't come to judge, I came to save. Men refused. Verse 48, "He that rejecteth Me and receiveth not My words hath one that judges him, the Word that I have spoken the same shall judge him in the last day."

You know what's going to judge a man without Christ? The Word that Jesus spoke, the actual words that He spoke. Let me give you an illustration of that. The Law says...Do this and you'll die. The Law says...If you kill somebody, you'll die. So you kill somebody, then what becomes your judge? The Law does because the Law said you had to die. The Law says if you violate this thing you'll have to pay a fine. So you violate it and the Law is read to you, the Law is your judge. Jesus came along and said, "Believe you have life, refuse you have death." You refuse, the statement of Jesus is your

judge. In other words, the words of Christ become your judge if you refuse Christ. Christ's word is the judge of every man. It doesn't have to be Christ personally. If you...if you kill somebody and you're sentenced by the Law that said if you murder you pay, you can't blame the judge and say, "You're the one, Judge, who sent me to jail, it's all your fault?" No. It's not his fault, he merely is there to make sure that that law...that that law operates on you. And that's how it is at the Great White Throne when Jesus is going to judge men. He's not going to be there to pass all the verdicts just ipso-facto without any other relationship, He is only there to say...Now here was the law, you violated it, so by that law you are judged. So if you don't believe, the Law, the word of Jesus is going to be your judge.

You say, "Well, boy, Jesus must think His words are pretty hot stuff." That's why it's verse 49 that comes next. "For I have not spoken of Myself, but the Father who sent Me, He gave Me a commandment what I should say and what I should speak...verse 50...and I know that His commandment is life everlasting. Whatsoever I speak, therefore, even as the Father said unto Me, so I speak." The reason Jesus' laws are so unchangeable and so absolute is because they came from God.

There you have it, friends. There you have it. If a man refuses to hear the teaching of Jesus Christ, he sentences himself. He assigns himself to judgment. Jesus came to save. He came to give light. He came to show men the knowledge of God. He came to offer men everlasting life. If a man refuses it, a man then assigns himself to judgment. Hebrews 12:25, "See that you refuse not Him that speaketh for if they escape not who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more shall we not escape if we turn away from Him that speaketh from heaven?" Listen to me, friend, if the people who lived when the prophets lived and when Jesus lived refused and serious judgment came on them, how much more serious on us who refuse when God speaks right out of heaven? Whose voice then shook the earth. "But now He hath promise saying yet once more I shake not the earth only but also heaven and this word yet once more signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken." He goes on to say that God is a consuming fire. Listen, if it was serious when men refused God through the voice of His prophets and His Son, how much more serious is it going to be when we refuse His direct voice to us in His Word? God is a consuming fire. To believe is everlasting life, to reject and harden your heart may mean that God will harden it for you. You will not believe and soon you cannot believe.

Israel had a day, my friend, and it ended. And so could yours. I pray, God, that you receive Jesus Christ while the light is still available. Let's pray.

Our Father, we thank You this morning for these truths. Speak to hearts, convict hearts, Lord. Don't let anybody go from this place who hasn't made it right with Jesus Christ. This day we pray in His name. Amen.

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