



Calvary of Albuquerque

Believe It or Not! - John 12:37-50

From the Series, Believe:879

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MESSAGE SUMMARY

Most of you reading this are believers. Some are not. Both are dangerous positions to take but for different reasons—vastly different reasons! This paragraph in John's Gospel is the summary of all that has been written, from chapters 1 through 13. It reviews the two different responses people have to Jesus and then gives us Jesus' own synopsis on faith and unbelief. Today you will be able to understand the real differences and consequences of faith and unbelief.

OUTLINE

- I. Unbelief is Dangerous (vv. 37-41)
- II. Faith Can Be Dangerous Too (vv. 42-43)
- III. Jesus Shows the Difference (vv. 44-50)
 - A. Faith Honors God / Unbelief Doesn't
 - B. Faith Brightens Your Life / Unbelief Darkens It
 - C. Faith Opens the Door to the Future / Unbelief Closes It



Things to Ponder:

1. Can you remember being stubborn about something as a child? What was the result of your stubbornness? Did it serve you well? Have you changed much since then?
2. Why didn't people believe in Jesus? What is the human part in unbelief and what is God's part? Does it work the same way with belief?
3. How would you describe your heart's condition right now? (Soft and pliable? Slow and cautious? Hard and immovable?) Which is better and why?

DETAILED NOTES

- I. Introduction
 - A. God provided only one way for mankind to go to heaven: through Jesus Christ
 1. John will show us two groups
 - a. Those who believe based on what they saw and heard
 - b. Those who do not believe despite what they say and heard
 2. John provides a general survey regarding the people who encountered Jesus
 - B. According to a survey by the Barna Group, among those who claim to be born-again Christians:
 1. 46% believe in absolute moral truth; more than half do not
 2. Less than 50% reject the notion that you can earn your salvation; more than half believe they can earn their way to heaven
 3. Only a minority of Americans believe in the Jesus of the New Testament
 - C. We are entering a transitional section of the Gospel of John
 1. Jesus is entering his private ministry
 - a. Intimate time with the disciples
 - b. John 13-16, and some of chapter 17 focus on training the apostles
 - c. Jesus ends his public ministry in John 12:36: "These things Jesus spoke, and departed, and was hidden from them."
 - d. Soon he will be in the upper room with his disciples
 2. John assesses the first twelve chapters; Jesus' 3 ½ years of public ministry
 - a. Commentary about the people around Jesus
 - b. Commentary about Jesus Himself

II. Unbelief is Dangerous (vv. 37-41)

- A. They didn't believe in spite of the preponderance of the evidence
 - 1. Water to wine (See John 2)
 - 2. Walked on water at the Sea of Galilee (See John 6:15-21)
 - 3. Fed thousands with a few loaves and fish (See John 6:1-14)
 - 4. Healed the Nobleman's son long distance (See John 4:46-54)
 - 5. Healed the blind man (See John 9)
 - 6. Healed the paralytic at the pool of Bethesda (See John 5)
 - 7. Resurrection of Lazarus from the dead (See John 11)
 - 8. 34 miraculous signs recorded in the four gospels demonstrate Jesus' power over death, disease, demons, and nature
- B. Miracles are the suspension of natural law and imposition of supernatural force
 - 1. "There is no longer either need or room for supernatural beings capable of affecting the course of events in the evolutionary pattern of thought." Julian Huxley
 - 2. Saw and did not believe; willful disbelief
- C. Unbelief doesn't take God by surprise (See Isaiah 53:1, Isaiah 6:9-10)
 - 1. God is unshaken and unmoved; we should be unshaken and unmoved
 - 2. God's purpose isn't frustrated by the agnostic, atheist, or ardent unbeliever
 - 3. Glorifies Him in the end and accomplishes His purpose
- D. Unbelief has 2 layers
 - 1. Your own choice, will, decision, response
 - a. Shown the evidence, examine, make conclusion
 - b. Not a matter of can't: won't
 - 2. Those who persistently harden their hearts will have their hearts hardened
 - a. If you persist in unbelief, God will confirm your decision (i.e., Pharaoh "I will harden his heart" [Exodus 4:21], Pharaoh "hardened his heart" [See Exodus 8:15, Exodus 8:32, Exodus 9:34])
 - b. "Seek the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near." (Isaiah 55:6)
- E. Unbelief is progressive: Willful blindness will be punished by judicial blindness

III. Faith Can be Dangerous Too (vv. 42-43)

- A. Among the rulers, many believed but didn't confess
- B. Persecution: faith can be life-threatening
- C. Persecution leads to compromise: "put out of the synagogue"
 - 1. "For the Jews had agreed already that if anyone confessed that He was Christ, he would be put out of the synagogue" (John 9:22)
 - 2. ἀποσυνάγωγος - aposynagogos - away from the synagogue, expelled from the synagogue, excommunicated
 - 3. Kicked out of the social structure of Judaism
- D. Martyrdom
 - 1. More Christians were martyred in the twentieth century than in any previous century
 - 2. More Christians were martyred in the twentieth century than in previous centuries combined
 - 3. Over 100 million Christians martyred
 - 4. One out of every 200 can expect to be martyred
- E. Persecution (i.e., in Philadelphia, eleven arrested for street witnessing and received a criminal sentence; hate-crime law disallowed the sharing of the gospel)
- F. Danger: tempted to compromise faith in order that those around us will like us
 - 1. "Do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ." (Galatians 1:10)
 - 2. Secret discipleship impossible
 - a. Discipleship will destroy secrecy
 - b. Secrecy will destroy discipleship
 - 3. "The fear of man brings a snare" (Proverbs 29:25)
 - 4. "Fearing people is a dangerous trap, but to trust the LORD means safety" (Proverbs 29:25 NLT)
 - 5. "Backward Christian soldiers, fleeing from the fight, with the cross of Jesus, nearly out of sight. Christ our rightful master stands against the foe, onward into battle, we seem afraid to go." -George Verwer

IV. Jesus Shows the Difference (vv. 44-50)

- A. Faith Honors God / Unbelief Doesn't
 - 1. If God sent Jesus, to dishonor Jesus, dishonors God
 - a. "Whoever believes in me doesn't merely believe in me only, but also believes in the Father"
 - b. Jesus and the Father are in joint partnership, when dealing with Jesus you are also dealing with the Father who sent Him.
 - c. To say you believe in God, yet reject the one He sent into the world is in effect rejecting God
 - 2. Honor God: receive Jesus
 - 3. All the Father ever had to say to us is summed up in Jesus Christ
 - "God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son" (Hebrews 1:1-2)
 - 4. The World will not honor believers; the world will persecute you if you truly follow Christ
 - a. Honor the Father or live to please men
 - b. The church at Smyrna; the persecuted church
 - "I know your works, tribulation, and poverty (but you are rich);" (Revelation 2:9)
 - 5. "It's preferable to have the whole world against you then to have Jesus offended with you." Thomas a Kempis
- B. Faith Brightens Your Life / Unbelief Darkens It
 - 1. Recurrent theme:
 - a. "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it." (John 1:4-5)

- b. "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life." (John 8:12)
 - 2. We can't be all God wants us to be until we walk in the light of Christ.
 - 3. Medical science can add years to life. Only Jesus adds life to years.
- C. Faith Opens the Door to the Future / Unbelief Closes It
 - 1. Jesus gives the eternal consequences
 - a. Faith - eternal life
 - b. Unbelief - judgment
 - 2. First coming, Jesus came to save: to be the sacrifice that atones for sin
 - 3. Second coming, Jesus will come as judge
 - a. "Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war." (Revelation 19:11)
 - b. The standard of judgment is the word He already spoke
 - 4. To receive Jesus Christ is to refuse judgment; to refuse Jesus Christ is to receive judgment
 - 5. God commands everlasting life
 - a. "And I know that His command is everlasting life" (v. 50)
 - b. "Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent," (Acts 17:30)

Greek Terms: ἀποσυνάγωγος - aposunagogos - away from the synagogue, expelled from the synagogue, excommunicated

Figures Referenced: Robert Ripley; Norbert Pearlroth; George Verwer; Thomas a Kempis;

Cross References: Exodus 4:21; Exodus 8:15, Exodus 8:32, Exodus 9:34; Proverbs 29:25; Isaiah 6:9-10; Isaiah 53:1; Isaiah 55:6; John 1:4-5; John 2; John 4:46-54; John 5; John 6:1-14; John 6:15-21; John 8:12; John 9; John 9:22; John 11; John 12:36; Acts 17:30; Galatians 1:10; Hebrews 1:1-2; Revelation 2:9; Revelation 19:11