

## 50. Jesus Saw that Many Wanted the Praise of Men

We saw in our last topic that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that Jesus died for the sins of the whole world. We also saw that it is His plan to save people of every tribe, tongue, people and nation. However, in this topic we will see that many people in the time of Jesus rejected the eternal life for which Jesus would die because they wanted the praise of men.

In our last topic, we saw that Jesus would be lifted up from the earth. In this topic, we see that the people questioned what Jesus had said. John 12:34-36 says, “The people answered Him, ‘We have heard from the law that the Christ remains forever; and how *can* You say, ‘The Son of Man must be lifted up’? Who is this Son of Man?’ Then Jesus said to them, ‘A little while longer the light is with you. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you; he who walks in darkness does not know where he is going. While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light.’ These things Jesus spoke, and departed, and was hidden from them.” We see that the people did not understand what the Old Testament teaches so they asked Jesus two questions.

The people introduced their questions by saying that they had heard from the law that the Christ remains forever. Two Old Testament verses that are often quoted at Christmas are Isaiah 9:6-7 which say, “For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of *His* government and peace *there will be* no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.” In these verses, we see that they were right that the Christ (Messiah) would live forever. However, what they did not understand was that His eternal life would include His death and resurrection.

Their first question was, “How *can* You say, ‘The Son of Man must be lifted up’?” This question shows that the people had no understanding that the Messiah would die on a cross. They also lacked understanding of the fact that the Old Testament talked frequently about the sufferings, death and resurrection of the Christ. Isaiah 53:7-8 says, “He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment, and who will declare His generation? For He was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgressions of My people He was stricken.”

Their second question was, “Who is this Son of Man?” Jesus had told the Jews in Jerusalem in John 5:26-27, “‘For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself, and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man.’” Back on that day, the Jews had wanted to kill Jesus because they said He had broken the Sabbath and also made Himself equal with God in verse 18. Now, they wanted to know who this Son of Man was. Jesus used this question for one more opportunity before His crucifixion to publicly offer the Jews the opportunity to believe in the Son of Man. He told the people that they only had the light a little longer and to believe in the light and become sons of light before the darkness

overtook them. He warned that those walking in darkness do not know where they are going. After speaking these things, Jesus departed from the crowd and was hidden from them.

We see the response of most of the people in John 12:37 and the fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah in verses 38-41. John 12:37-41 says, “But although He had done so many signs before them, they did not believe in Him, 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?’ Therefore they could not believe, because Isaiah said again: ‘He has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts, lest they should see with their eyes, lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, so that I should heal them.’” These things Isaiah said when he saw His glory and spoke of Him.” Jesus had done many signs to prove that He is both the Son of Man and the Son of God.

However, we see that in spite of the signs that Jesus had done, the people, especially the rulers, did not believe in Jesus, even though one very recent sign was the raising of Lazarus from the dead after he had been dead for four days. The people did not realize that they were fulfilling the prophecy that had been spoken by Isaiah. As we saw above, chapter 53 of Isaiah prophesied the rejection and death of the Christ (Messiah). This first quote by Isaiah comes from Isaiah 53:1 where we read, “Who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?” Jesus was not accepted as the Christ by most of the Jews, especially not by the religious leaders of the Jews.

As John wrote this book, he also explained why the Jews could not believe because of another prophecy given by Isaiah. Isaiah was given this prophecy when he saw the glory of God and responded to the call of the Lord in Isaiah 6:8b which says, “‘Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?’” Then I said, ‘Here *am* I! Send me.’” God told Isaiah that because of the unbelief of the people of Judah, He had blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts. God said that the condition of unbelief by most of the Jews would last until He had completed His judgment against them. Only after that judgment was complete would God heal the Jews.

God told Isaiah that He would bring healing to the Jews after that time of blinding was over. The Lord, later, used Paul to write about the time when that blindness would be healed. Romans 11:25-27 says, “For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: ‘The Deliverer will come out of Zion, And He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; for this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins.’” We see that the day will come in the future when the Jews of that day will recognize that Jesus is the Christ for whom they have been waiting. That healing of the Jews as a whole is described in Romans 11:32-33 where we read, “For God has committed them all to disobedience, that He might have mercy on all. Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable *are* His judgments and His ways past finding out!” Both Jews and Gentiles can look forward to that future day when God will show His mercy to both the Jews and Gentiles.

However, in this chapter of John, we see that many of the Jewish leaders did believe Jesus but they chose not to recognize Him as the Lord and Master of their lives. John 12:42-43 says, “Nevertheless even among the rulers many believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess *Him*, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.” Many of the Jewish rulers did believe that Jesus was from God.

However, their belief did not result in true faith. 2 Corinthians 7:9-10 explains the difference between true repentance and false repentance when those verses say, “Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that your sorrow led to repentance. For you were made sorry in a godly manner, that you might suffer loss from us in nothing. For godly sorrow produces repentance *leading* to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.” Here, we see that people can be sorry for their sins and even believe but that does not mean that it will always lead them to true faith. Many people are sorry for their sins or sorry that they got caught. Most such people never come to true repentance and faith. We see that the sorrow of the world leads to death. That describes the beliefs of the rulers of the Jews in these verses.

In contrast, true repentance and faith results in belief that leads to eternal life. We see in the book of Acts that there was a large number in Jerusalem that did come to true faith after the death and resurrection of Jesus. Acts 2:37-39 says, “Now when they heard *this*, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, ‘Men *and* brethren, what shall we do?’ Then Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.’” We see that 3,000 responded in true repentance and faith that day and many more in the following days.

We also see the reason why many did not confess Jesus before His death and resurrection. One reason was their fear of the Pharisees. John 9:34 explains why many rulers had a fear of the Pharisees. That verse says, “They answered and said to him, ‘You were completely born in sins, and are you teaching us?’ And they cast him out.” The man born blind had been expelled from the synagogue because he recognized Jesus as Lord. However, these verses give the main reason why many did not confess Jesus. John 12:43 says, “For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.” This verse shows that they were more eager to please men than to please God.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that people will resist coming to Jesus as Lord and Savior as long as such individuals seek the praise of men rather than God. That is why the Holy Spirit must convict, the Father must draw and then those who respond will do so because Jesus came to seek and save. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to work with the Trinity in evangelism.