

Why People Don't Believe

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Some say that if they were alive when Jesus was on the earth, they would have surely believed in Him.

However, the gospel writers' records show that this was not the case since the majority of people at that time did not believe.

In this lesson, I will try to answer why this was so then and why it is so even to this day.

Have you ever wondered why they didn't believe Jesus when He was on earth?

All kinds of stories that we see throughout the gospels of people not believing Him.

But have you ever wondered why?

After all, He performed miracles, He taught the people about heavenly things.

He didn't sin in any way in order to hurt their potential for believing in Him.

I've heard some say, you know, if I was back there, I would have believed.

If I could take a time machine and go back a couple of thousand years and

I could be there in the crowd and I could see the miracles and I could hear Him, I would've believed.

But think about it for a moment. The people who were actually there, they didn't believe. Why?

Well, the short answer is they didn't like what He was about to do and they didn't like what He was asking them to do,

So, my lesson from John chapter 12 is given to demonstrate this point.

So, let's set the scene here, John chapter 12, this of course is the scene of Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem,

It is the culmination of his earthly ministry.

With the raising of Lazarus from the dead, witnessed by many, the news about him spread quickly,

that the miracle worker was here along with His closest disciples.

There was great excitement and anticipation among the people

They saw in Jesus a potential national leader who could change their condition.

And so let's read before I get any further into the commentary here, let's read some of this passage, it says,

Slide - John 12:12-15 "The next day a great multitude that had come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, took branches of palm trees and went out to meet Him, and cried out: "Hosanna! 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!' The King of Israel!"

Slide - "Then Jesus, when He had found a young donkey, sat on it; as it is written: "Fear not, daughter of Zion; Behold, your King is coming, Sitting on a donkey's colt."

Slide - "His disciples did not understand these things at first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things were written about Him and that they had done these things to Him. Therefore the people, who were with Him when He called Lazarus out of his tomb and raised him from the dead, bore witness."

Slide - "For this reason the people also met Him, because they heard that He had done this sign. The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, "You see that you are accomplishing nothing. Look, the world has gone after Him!"

So, as I mentioned, great excitement, great anticipation among the people.

they saw in Jesus a potential national leader who could change their condition,

I mean, if he could raise a man from the dead, he could perhaps raise a nation from bondage and poverty to freedom and prosperity, no longer under the yoke of Roman oppression.

Slide - This was it. Their time was here. And so they hailed him as king.

I mean, only kings entered a city with the populace cheering them, it wasn't something that was done for just anybody.

This was an ancient custom of making a king out of one who showed leadership or bravery or as in Jesus's case, showed signs that they were from God.

So they didn't just cheer him as he entered the city, they were ready to make him their king.

Notice without a word as he enters the city but the scene and the mood will change very quickly when the words that Jesus speaks to the crowd are said.

So, while this frenzied activity is going on, a seemingly insignificant event occurs.

Just that doesn't seem to match, that kind of breaks the rhythm of what's going on here.

Two Greeks in the crowd seek to speak with Jesus in John 12:20-22

Now John doesn't tell us if these two actually spoke to the Lord,

however, we do know that at this point Jesus was ready to reveal the will of God concerning his plan for man's salvation.

I'm only speculating here but perhaps this was the topic of their private conversation that Jesus chooses to share with the crowd in the following verses.

He may have talked to these two Greeks about some of the things he was going to share with the adoring crowd.

It's likely that the appearance of these two Greek converts to Judaism arriving so close to Jesus's final work on the cross, hinted at the fact that the good news of his death and his burial and his resurrection would soon be preached to all men according to God's plan, designed before the foundation of the world, (I Peter 1:20).

So, at this point, John changes from kind of a general narrative of what was taking place and he telescopes into a closeup of Jesus addressing the excited crowd that has gathered around him.

And without any introduction or preamble Jesus preaches the core gospel message to them.

Slide - John 12:23-26 "But Jesus answered them, saying, "The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified. Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain."

Slide - "He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor."

And so, in these few words Jesus reveals the mystery concerning the way God has engineered the salvation of mankind, and the part that each one plays in God's plan.

Slide - And so, you have God's part. Well, God's part includes a crucified savior, that's his contribution.

God's way to deal with the cause of mankind's present suffering and eventual condemnation and eternal spiritual death, his manner of dealing with that is through a process called atonement, that's his answer to that.

The death of one in payment for the sins of all.

The perfect sinless life of Jesus freely offered to remove the offenses and the guilt of mankind.

You see, unlike animal sacrifices where creatures that have no conscience,

therefore, they have no sin and they have no free will, therefore, they really don't have any spiritual value.

These creatures were offered as a preview of the true atonement that was to come.

Well, then, Jesus will be offered and done so as an act of his will and he will offer himself as a perfect sacrifice, he had no sin because he had perfectly obeyed and fulfilled God's law.

And his offering atoned for all sin because his offering was perfect and divine since he was the divine son of God.

And so Jesus reveals how God chose to deal with sin.

The offering of his son as atonement or payment, for the sins of all men.

There would now be a remedy, there would now be a final solution for the curse of sin and death that affected all of mankind, both Jew and Gentile.

Slide - There's also man's part. Man's part would be a crucified life.

The continual putting to death of the carnal man.

The continual putting to death of pride and selfishness and greed and sexual immorality and so on and so forth.

The continual putting to death of these things and the raising up of the spiritual man in humility and submissiveness, this was the ongoing task of the true disciple of Jesus.

This was basically the choice and how to implement that correct choice in one's life.

God provides the crucified savior.

We provide the crucified life

so that was the proposal that Jesus was making here in the beginning of his speech

so the crowd is listening to him and they respond and how do the crowd respond?

Well, they didn't like it, that's how they responded.

They didn't like the idea of a crucified savior and even less the idea of a crucified life.

Slide - John 12:27-30 "Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour. Father, glorify Your name." Then a voice came from heaven, saying, "I have both glorified it and will glorify it again."

Slide - Therefore the people who stood by and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, "An angel has spoken to Him." Jesus answered and said, "This voice did not come because of Me, but for your sake."

So, Jesus continues his discourse with a prayer, if there was any doubt about his person or the authority of his message, the audible response from heaven should have dispelled all doubt, right? Wrong.

What do people say when they hear this voice from heaven?

Well, some sort of tossed it aside as a natural occurrence.

I think it must have been some thunder or lightning or something.

Others compromised and said well, maybe it was an angel that spoke to Jesus, no one, however, accepted that it was God himself,

not only God himself but God was confirming what Jesus was saying about the crucified savior and the crucified life.

Jesus' words acting as a sobering shower of reality for the crowd, now in case there was any doubt about what was said previously,

Jesus is even more graphic in his description of the final step in his mission and its results and so we read in;

Slide - John 12:31-33 “Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself.” This He said, signifying by what death He would die.”

The world disintegrated because of sin and in bondage because of its fear of death had tried to organize itself without God and had selected a new ruler, a new prince.

The devil himself.

Now, however, this order was changed forever because with his atoning sacrifice,

Jesus would blot out sin He would free the captives from the fear of death and he would destroy forever the power of Satan.

Slide - Now the hard news in all of this for his hearers was that all of these things would be accomplished through his death on the cross and his glorious resurrection.

Not through some new political order where he would lead the Jewish nation to freedom and prosperity as their earthly king.

Forget this king business, he's saying to them.

The only way that you'll be free from death and condemnation is if I die and I resurrect, only if this happens can you be free.

And so we see a second response from the crowd and you know what the second response is? They didn't like it.

They didn't like the first thing he said and they didn't like the second thing that he said.

Slide - John 12:34 “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?”

And so the crowd goes from adoration, think now, to doubt, and now to outright scorn and challenge.

Slide - After all, they're saying who is this son of man? Our Messiah is going to live forever.

Our Messiah will be great and powerful.

Our Messiah, he's not going to be some dead sacrifice, he's not going to be humble or meek or a servant, on the contrary, he's going to be a king.

And he's going to bring with him everything that a king brings.

The point of the lesson is right here, if you're wondering.

Right here. **Slide** - They did not like or accept a crucified savior.

Their Messiah was not envisioned as a servant with a meek and a humble spirit.

In addition to this, **Slide** - they didn't like or want a crucified life.

Their vision of deliverance didn't picture a life of service in humility, they wanted greatness.

They wanted to share in the earthly glory that a powerful leader could bring.

Not the shame of the cross borne by the sacrificial lamb of God, this was not what they saw in their future.

Now we see Jesus responding to the crowd.

Slide - John 12:35-36 "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."

And so the Lord does not respond with another miracle or a sign, that would have been a very human thing to do, right, you don't believe me, watch this, you know, poof, no, he doesn't respond in that way.

He doesn't even respond with more teaching in order to prove them wrong.

Slide - Instead, he gives them a caution. A warning. Walk while you have the light.

Put your trust, he says, in the light.

Jesus, who could read men's hearts, saw what was in their hearts.

They wanted to find God in signs and miracles, external manifestations, earthly glory, rewards, they were looking for him there.

They looked for God with physical eyes in ways that they saw other men, but Jesus cautions them to find God,

To find the truth and the way to life through the eyes of light that is sent from God,

from above, and not from below, in other words, they could only see the truth through God's light and not through their own light.

God's light was brought to them by Jesus.

Not his personal physical presence but through the words and the teachings that he brought from God.

This was the light that God himself provided to enable mankind to see him and to know him and to find him.

So, what are the results? Well, do you remember the original question? Why didn't they believe him?

And even some might say, if I was there, I would've believed.

What happens next?

Slide - John 12:37-43 "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:

Slide - “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.

Slide - 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.

Slide - **These verses explained that they did not believe him because their hearts were hardened by sin and indifference.**

This was evident long before Jesus appeared but even the miracles and the signs and the teachings that he did were not able to pierce their hard hearts.

Even after raising Lazarus from the dead, if you read that passage, he's just raised Lazarus from the dead, they know it's not a trick because Lazarus they know has been in the grave for like four days, he stinks.

And yet he comes out, at Jesus's word and what was their response?

Their response was to make a plot to figure a way to kill him.

We can't let this guy keep going. He's raising people from the dead.

We've got to get rid of him, think about that for a second.

They want to get rid of the guy who has the power to raise people from the dead.

What chance do you think they have of doing that?

They cared more about what men would say than what God would say.

They were so invested in this world that they would not risk their stake in this world in order to take hold of the better world that was to come.

Even though the signs and miracles pointed them towards a sure but unseen life after this life, they refused to take a step towards it for fear of losing their place in the physical world they could still see and touch.

There's a sort of an epilogue to this story and it comes in the form of a promise starting in verse 44.

Slide - John 12:44-50 “Then Jesus cried out and said, “He who believes in Me, believes not in Me but in Him who sent Me. And he who sees Me sees Him who sent Me. I have come as a light into the world, that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness.

Slide - 47 And if anyone hears My words and does not believe, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day.

Slide - 49 For I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak. And I know that His command is everlasting life. Therefore, whatever I speak, just as the Father has told Me, so I speak.”

So, what's the promise?

Slide - **For those who believe, Jesus assures the believer that his faith and his way is secure.**

Because God was the source of the light that guided him into eternity.

Don't be afraid, be absolutely sure that you are going to go where the Bible is promising you to go because the one who is promising is God himself

and then conversely, he says to disbelievers, the promise that the way offered to them was the very way that led to God and this fact would be confirmed on the last day.

Isn't that interesting? **He says to believers; you're not going to make it because you didn't believe.**

He says to them; the promise I'm giving you is the promise you need to get to heaven.

He is reminding them that they are rejecting the truth.

That they are rejecting the sure promise of heaven.

In effect, these were two sides of the same promise.

For those who believed and obeyed, they were words of salvation and welcome on the last day

and for those who disbelieved, they would be words of condemnation and rejection on the last day.

This is what he's saying, I'm telling you. But we're asking the same question today, aren't we?

Why don't people believe?

Some might say that it's because Jesus isn't here in the flesh, performing miracles but that can't be the reason since they refused to believe when he was here on earth performing many miracles.

Slide - No, the answer is the same today as it was then.

Belief continues to require a crucified Lord and a crucified life.

And people do not like that any better now than they did back then.

Today, we continue to want a Lord who will allow us to live our lives in our own way since crucifixion of the flesh, even metaphorically, is still offensive to most people.

Our lack of faith or our weak faith renders us at times unable to give up earthly physical things in order to require eternal heavenly things.

Because nothing has changed and I have no better response to mankind's disbelief than what Jesus himself has prescribed to offer a largely disbelieving world.

The message today is exactly the same as the message that Jesus gave to his disciples.

Slide - Mark 16:15-16 "And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned."

Such a short verse that compresses everything down to just two ideas.

Those who believe and are baptized, they'll be saved and those who disbelieve, well, obviously, if they disbelieve, they won't accept baptism but those who disbelieve will be condemned.

Rejecting this verse, saying it doesn't really mean this, it means something else or they say it's not legitimate.

It doesn't appear in certain manuscripts.

Everything they can think of to try to discredit this simple verse where Jesus is simply laying out 2000 years later the very same choice that the people in the crowd had on that day when they celebrated his entrance into the city of Jerusalem and then when he began to talk to them about the crucified Lord and the crucified life, oh, they backed up, is that really God speaking?

Maybe that was just thunder, maybe that was just something I heard, maybe it's just a phase I went through.

Surely you can't be asking us to do this.

The very same objections that they were voicing to the one who did miracles in their presence.

He had just raised someone from the dead and yet they continued to nitpick at the things that he was saying,

2000 years later, people continue to nitpick at this and other passages where Jesus is saying to his followers I am the crucified Lord.

And if you wish to follow me, then you will have a crucified life and it begins with a confession of faith and an immersion in water in order to have sins forgiven.

The light that Jesus brought into the world continues to shine brightly, leading all of mankind to the revelation that Jesus dies to atone for the sins of all and that forgiveness and eternal life are now freely offered to all who believe in him.

I encourage everyone to trust this light. Trust this light and obey this light and live by this light until Jesus returns, why?

Because this is the only light that he gives us that will lead us to where we want to go and where we want to go is heaven where Jesus is now and will be forever.

If anyone this morning needs the help to begin the journey thru repentance and baptism or the prayers to carry on in a difficult moment

Please we encourage you to come forward now as we stand and as we sing our song of encouragement.

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