

Belief and Unbelief

John 12:37-50

The Lord Jesus Christ had entered Jerusalem as the conquering King of Kings. There had been acclaim from the multitude. They had cried out, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!"

Note the different reactions to him. There was a jealous reaction from the Pharisees. They said, "Look, the whole world has gone after him." But the Lord was sought by some "Greeks" or Gentiles. They came desiring to see him, and their coming seems to have been the event that caused the Lord to announce that the hour had come for the Son of Man to be glorified.

He was approved by the Father. After the Lord had prayed, "Father, glorify your name," the heavenly voice of confirmation rang out, "I have glorified it and will glorify it again."

The Lord had taught, "Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few." (Matthew 7:13-14) Indeed he was rejected by many, but accepted by some.

The multitude did not believe in Christ. The apostle Paul later would say that the Jews demand signs. The Lord had graciously given many sign miracles, but still they did not believe. John tells us that this merely fulfilled the expectation of the prophet Isaiah. They did not succeed in frustrating the will of God.

One often misunderstood truth of scripture is that many will bring glory to God by their eventual condemnation. One famous Old Testament passage, Isaiah, chapter six, calls for someone to go and speak a word from the Lord to Israel. But the word to be spoken was a word of judgment.

Another sad truth is that many will have a kind of "belief" but will not have the courage of true conviction. They are said to have loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God.

Are these people true disciples of Christ? The Lord himself said, "So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven." (Matthew 10:32-33)

A true believer will acknowledge Christ as Lord. Since the death and resurrection of the Lord, the actual public profession of faith is, and always was, baptism. It is in that way that we say publicly, "I believe that Christ Jesus died on the cross as my substitute, was buried but rose again from death and the grave for my salvation."

Faith in Christ is faith in the Father who sent him. To see the Lord Jesus Christ is to see the Father. It is by Christ that we come to see all that we need to know about God. It is by Christ that we come to see ourselves as sinners before God. It is by

Christ that we see the glories of a salvation that is set before us, as one might set the best of food before a starving man.

It is by Christ that we are enabled to grasp our need and our desperate condition. It is by Christ that we come to God's throne of mercy and find pardon and justification before God.

Eternal life comes to undeserving sinners because of the perfect obedience of Christ. We believe in him plus nothing else. We put our faith in him. The illustration that the writer of Hebrews uses is the Sabbath rest of God. The Lord created all things in six days and rested on the seventh. He did no work on that day.

So it is with us. We are to do no work for our salvation. We cannot do any work that would be acceptable to God. We are sinners and impure. But Christ was perfectly obedient to the will of the Father. We depend on him. We rest our case in him. We admit that we can do nothing that is worthy of eternal life. And so we cast ourselves on the Lord Jesus Christ for mercy. And, amazingly we find deliverance for all that can bring us harm. We find deliverance from future judgment. We find ourselves made pure, pristine, before a very *gracious Lord*.

by Joe Nesom