

“They Believed Not On Him”

Introduction. Despite evidence to substantiate the claims of Jesus, such as the testimony of the Father through signs and scripture, John said that many did not believe in Him (John 12:37). In all fairness, those to whom John refers did not have the fullness of evidence presented in the gospel itself. They may have seen some of the signs, but not all. Some may have been ignorant of the scriptures and their testimony concerning Jesus. They had yet to be given the witness of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

But even with the abundance of evidence in John’s gospel, many still did not believe in Jesus in His days. Why? There are several reasons, and John mentions them in the course of his gospel. Studying these may help us cross the bridge between belief and obedience (Romans 10:16). Ronald Dunn said, “Disobedience and unbelief are two sides of the same coin.”

I. ***Lack Of Spiritual Perception***

A. They focused on the material.

1. They were impressed by His feeding of the 5,000 (John 6:14-15). They saw in Him someone who could meet their material needs, and they wanted to make Him a king.
2. But His discourse on the bread of life caused many to leave (John 6:60, 66). He told them to work for the food that endures to everlasting life (John 6:27).

B. Many lack spiritual perception today.

1. They are attracted by carnality. They want the church to provide for their physical needs and entertain them or their children.
2. Just like quiet waters mirror everything undistorted, only in a quiet mind is there adequate perception of the world.
3. If a church offers only the Bible, some look elsewhere. Not content with the spiritual nature of the kingdom (Romans 14:17), they reject the demands of faith in Jesus.

II. ***Fear And Moral Cowardice***

A. They were afraid of what others thought.

1. The multitude was afraid of what the Jews might think (John 7:13), and so were the parents of the man born blind (John 9:20-22).
2. Some of the rulers were afraid of the Pharisees (John 12:42-43), while Pilate was afraid of Caesar (John 19:12-13).

B. The same fear exists in some today.

1. People can be afraid that their peers at school might ridicule them, or be afraid that their coworkers might ostracize them. In society

- now, someone might be afraid of persecution for being “politically incorrect” or “religiously intolerant.”
2. No emotion so efficiently robs the mind of all its powers of acting and reasoning as fear. Fear truly is the beginning of defeat.
 3. Jesus taught His disciples whom they should fear (Matthew 10:28). Fearful of losing acceptance, and being outcast, has made many unwilling to believe in Jesus, and thereby be condemned (Revelation 21:8; 22:15).

III. **Misplaced Love**

- A. They loved in the wrong direction.
 1. They did not have a love for God (John 5:42-43).
 2. Instead, they loved the darkness or evil (John 3:19-20). They also loved the glory of men, wanting to be praised by them (John 12:42-43). They loved themselves and material gain, as in the case of Judas (John 12:6).
- B. Many have a displaced love today.
 1. They love family, popularity among friends, wealth, hobbies, or even immoral lifestyles that they do want to relinquish.
 2. But Jesus preached about loving and serving God (Matthew 6:24; 22:37; cf. Deuteronomy 7:7-9, 13). Love is crucial to being a successful Christian. Misplaced love often blinds one to the evidence that is capable of producing faith.

IV. **Hardened And Prejudiced Heart**

- A. Many were blinded by prejudice.
 1. The Pharisees were hardened by their traditions, making them blind to the miracle Jesus performed (John 9:13-16).
 2. They were so hardened by their prejudices that they were willing to kill Jesus despite His signs (John 11:46-47, 53), and they were willing to kill Lazarus (John 12:9-11).
- B. Many are hardened by their prejudice today.
 1. They are prejudiced for their traditions, creeds, denominations, etc. They are also prejudiced for their beliefs (e.g., evolution, humanism) which justify their lifestyles.
 2. This makes them unwilling to study the Bible, to see whether their cherished beliefs are true. Jesus warned about the dangers of hardened minds (Mark 4:12).

V. **Intellectual Pride**

- A. Some were afraid of being thought foolish.
 1. This tactic was used to persuade the soldiers not to believe (John 7:45-48).

2. An implied appeal was made to the "wisdom" of the rulers and the Pharisees.
- B. Many are hindered by intellectual pride today.
1. They do not want to be thought foolish by their professors in school, and they are impressed by the many "wise" and "mighty" people who do not believe in Jesus.
 2. Yet God chose what is foolish to save man, to confound the arrogant and proud "scholars" of the world (Luke 10:21; 1 Corinthians 1:18-21, 26-31). Pride not only withdraws the heart from God, but lifts it up against God (1 Corinthians 5:2, 6).

VI. ***Ignorance***

- A. Some rejected Christ because they did not know.
1. They were ignorant of the facts, leading to wrong conclusions (John 7:40-43).
 2. They thought Jesus was born in Nazareth, not Bethlehem (cf. Micah 5:1-2).
- B. The same ignorance still exists.
1. People do not consider evidences for the resurrection of Jesus Christ, yet they doubt the event, thinking it a "fairy tale." However, it was based on evidence (Luke 1:1-4).
 2. They believe in misconceptions or caricatures of Jesus Christ and His church. Unlike the noble Bereans, they make little effort to get all the facts (Acts 17:11; 1 Thessalonians 2:13).
 3. Sophocles said, "Ignorant men don't know what good they hold in their hands until they have flung it away."

Conclusion. Do you believe in Jesus? If not, is it because of one of the reasons we have discussed? Do you want to believe in Jesus? He offers you fellowship with God (John 14:6), salvation from sin (John 8:24), guidance throughout life (John 8:12), spiritual sustenance (John 6:35), abundant life (John 10:10), and immortality (John 11:25). Let the word of God, particularly John's gospel, give you the evidence necessary to believe in Jesus, that you might have life through His name (John 20:30-31; Romans 10:9-10).