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Believe it or Not

These Things are Written that You May Believe Series

John 12: 36-50

Pastor Bryan Clark

Over the years, there's been several iterations of a TV show. It came out in the '50s and '60s, came back in the '80s, and came back just a year or so ago, called *Ripley's Believe It or Not*. Basically the show features some sort of weird, mysterious something, and moves to the point where the host looks into the camera and says, "Believe it or not." In a sense, that's how John ends this section of his Gospel. He's made his case; he's laid it out there, and the conclusion is, you can believe it or not. Of course, everybody's free to have their own opinion to decide whether you want to believe or not. But it's important to remind ourselves that whether you believe it or not, has eternal consequences. One question we would wrestle with is, if John has presented such a compelling case, both then and now, why would anyone not believe? Well, that's what we want to talk about today.

If you have a Bible, turn with us to John, Chapter 12. This is the end of what scholars refer to as the *Book of Signs*, which is just a section of the Gospel of John. It essentially starts right after the prologue. So, John chapter 1, verse 19, runs up through the end of chapter 12, verse 50, and is referred to as the Book of Signs. It's the idea that John has made the claim that Jesus is God in the flesh, and now he is going to make his case that he's presented the words; he's presented the miracles, the signs. As a matter of fact, he says in chapter 20 that there are way more signs; there are so many more things we could talk about. But at this point, this is more than adequate, and now either people are going to believe, or not believe. This, then, will move us into chapter 13, which is a very private conversation between Jesus and His disciples, as He begins to prepare for the cross.

So scholars debate exactly where we're at in "*the week*". It's a little hard to figure out. A. T. Robertson in his *Harmony of the Gospels* says if you take all four Gospels, put everything together, try and figure out the "*last week*", he puts this at Tuesday evening, and I think most scholars think that's probably right. There's some disagreement on even the day Jesus was crucified. We will talk more about that next week, but it's most likely that this is Tuesday. Tuesday was filled with a lot of discussions and challenges and debates and conversations with the religious leaders and the crowd. It's probably been an exhausting day. This is Tuesday evening. This is really the last appeal to the crowd. Jesus is pretty quiet on Wednesday. Some people think he went back to Bethany, and then chapter 13 picks it back up Thursday evening and, at that point, it's less than twenty-four hours to the cross. So we pick it up part way through verse 36:

These things Jesus spoke, and He went away and hid Himself from them. But though He had performed so many signs before them, yet they were not believing in Him.

(*NASB, John 12:36b-37)

So Jesus is still managing His timetable because He wants to be crucified on Passover, as the Passover lamb, so He slips away after the conversation. Probably what's at the end of the chapter was still part of what happened on Tuesday evening, so John tells us that **He performed so many signs**. That Greek phrase isn't just referring to quantity of signs; it's referring to quality of signs. One of the commentators said it should read *such great signs*. We probably would say *so many great signs*. They were great signs. He had raised Lazarus from the dead. He had made a man who was born blind to

see. He had healed someone who had been sick for thirty-eight years. These weren't little things here and there. These were signs that no one could dispute or disbelieve. So many great signs, **yet they were not believing in Him**. It doesn't mean they didn't believe the signs; they did. They were indisputable, but it doesn't mean they believed in Him, who He was as the Christ, and what He had come to do.

So this is the question John is dealing with. John's writing somewhere around fifty years later, and probably some of the questions that he's addressing are if Jesus was the Messiah, if He did so many signs, if He was so compelling, why did the Jews not believe? And so that's what John is responding to in this part of the text.

One of the things that's worth thinking about is, over the years I've heard people say, "You know, with all the confusion in religion, all the different supposed ways to God, all the different churches, even among the atheists or the agnostic, if God is real, why doesn't He just show Himself and tell us what's true?" I've had people ask me that question, and usually my response is, "What do you want Him to do? He did exactly that. God became flesh in a miraculous way. He did all these signs. He told people, 'I'm sent from the Father.' This is what's true. This is your problem. This is what I've come to do, to solve your problem. This is the way of salvation." He has laid it all out. Part of what John is saying is there are plenty of words and there are plenty of signs. So why don't people believe? I would say it's a bit naive to think if God just showed up and revealed Himself, everyone would believe. The truth is He did—and they didn't! Because it's not an issue of signs. It's not an issue of confusion. It's far more complicated than that. Verse 38:

This was to fulfill the word of Isaiah the prophet which he spoke: "LORD, WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR REPORT? AND TO WHOM HAS THE ARM OF THE LORD BEEN REVEALED?"

So John is going to make his case by quoting from Isaiah, the prophet. When he says this is **to fulfill the word of Isaiah**, he's saying *fulfilling the prophecy*. Now this is interesting because the other Synoptic Gospel writers—Matthew, Mark, and Luke—especially Matthew says again and again, "This was the prophecy. This is how Jesus fulfilled it." But this is the first time that John uses this language. When you go on to the book of Acts, this is a significant part of the message. "This was the prophecy. This is how Jesus perfectly fulfilled it." But for John, this is the first time he refers to that. Now, fulfilling the prophecy is not the same thing as saying this was something God *caused* to happen.

There are many Old Testament prophecies where God, because He's God, because He's sovereign, because He knows the past, present and the future equally well, simply knows what's going to happen and states what's going to happen. That doesn't mean He's causing it or doesn't mean that He wants it. So in this case, He's saying seven hundred years before Christ, Isaiah the prophet actually predicted this is how people would respond to Jesus. So again, think about what people are saying. "If Jesus was so compelling, why didn't the Jews believe?" John is saying that shouldn't be that difficult to understand. Seven hundred years before Jesus, Isaiah predicted this is how people would respond.

So Isaiah was a prophet, let's say about seven hundred years before Jesus. At this time, the nation of Israel was divided between a northern kingdom and a southern kingdom. The northern kingdom had already fallen to the Assyrians in 722 B. C. This is now probably around 700, and Isaiah is going to Judah, which is the southern kingdom. And basically, speaking for God as a prophet, that if they don't repent of their rebellion and their sin, they too are going to experience God's discipline, which they ultimately did in 586 B.C. So Isaiah is called of God to go to Judah in order to warn them.

So in the text, John is quoting from Isaiah, chapter 53, verse 1. This is a very familiar section of the book of Isaiah. It's often read around Easter time. It's very often quoted in the New Testament, most of the time in relation to the *Atonement of Christ*, what we talked about a couple of weeks ago—the substitutionary Atonement of Christ. It's a section from about the middle of chapter 52, through chapter 53, of what's referred to as Jesus coming as *the suffering servant*, that His people would reject Him, and that He would ultimately die for the sins of the people. So it lays out the story of Jesus. In chapter 53, verse 1, that's what John is quoting:

Lord, who has believed our report? (The word report, we would say our *words* or *message*. He's bringing a report from God to the people, but they don't want to hear it.)
And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? (*Arm of the Lord* is a reference to power—His miracles, His signs.) (Isaiah, 53:1)

So what Isaiah is talking about is he has gone to the people on behalf of God as a prophet, and they won't listen to his words. They won't believe the signs. So you could hear in that, the relevance to the conversation that John is dealing with. Isaiah was kind of a type of Christ. He was a foreshadowing of the Messiah to come. He took the message to the people; they didn't listen to his words, didn't pay attention. They didn't believe his works, and they rejected his message. So it's a foreshadowing that one day the true suffering savior would come, and the people would not listen to His words; they would not believe His signs, and they would reject the messenger. So seven hundred years before Christ, it was predicted that the people would respond, just as they responded. Well it raises the question, “Why did they respond that way?” Verse 39:

For this reason they could not believe, for Isaiah said again, HE HAS BLINDED THEIR EYES AND HE HARDENED THEIR HEART, SO THAT THEY WOULD NOT SEE WITH THEIR EYES AND PERCEIVE WITH THEIR HEART, AND BE CONVERTED AND I HEAL THEM.” (Vs. 39-40)

So, this has the tendency to be a very confusing part of the text, and I really want to avoid that. Most of you are aware that there's an ongoing conversation in Christian circles that has to do with the sovereignty of God...predestination...election...human responsibility...freewill—and there's really good and godly scholars that have differing opinions on these matters. So there's a tendency by both sides, if you want to call it that, to often read into lots of texts, their particular view. So it's kind of like, “Aha, right there it says...” The problem with that—and I've had this conversation with people a lot over the years—is, you can pretty much make the Bible say anything you want if you just pull verses out of context. I refer to it as *verse plucking*. So one side plucks all their verses; the other side plucks all their verses, and it's always a standoff because one side says, “See here...” and you can do that if you just selectively pick your verses, and the other side says, “Well, see here...” and we really don't make progress in understanding these matters. In this particular text, it would be tempting for some to say, “Aha, there's John talking about predestination,” and getting into that whole conversation. I would suggest to you, with a high level of confidence, that has nothing to do with what John is talking about. As a matter of fact, that would be an unfortunate distraction from the message of John in this part of the text. I think what John is talking about is, he's not making a case for predestination or talking about election. What he's talking about here is something that's far more practical and far more understandable as it relates to the human condition.

So, in verse 39, he says, “**This is the reason they could not believe.**” So we're wrestling with the question, “Does that mean that God made it so they couldn't believe, or is John saying, because of choices they have made, they've reached a point where they could no longer see where their hearts were hardened, so they could no longer believe?”

So let's talk about what he means by that. In verse 40, he quotes again the prophet Isaiah, but this time from chapter 6, verse 10. Isaiah chapter 6 is a very familiar part of the book of Isaiah. I want to talk a little bit more about that in just a couple of minutes. But the end of verse 40—if the people would have listened, if they would have believed—the text says they could be **converted**. We would probably use the word they would *repent*. They would change their direction; they would change their mind and believe, and the result of that is they would be **healed**. It's this whole idea of if they would just listen and believe, God has what they're searching for. He wants them to know Him. He wants them to experience His healing, but they don't listen. They don't listen and they don't believe, and the reason is because they are *blind*, and they have *hard hearts*.

Now, one thing that's interesting is: if you go back and read Isaiah chapter 6, verse 10, Isaiah leads with *hardened hearts*, and then gets to the *blindness*. But John inverts that, which is not uncommon for New Testament writers to take some liberties with the Old Testament text. So he *starts* with *blindness*, probably because he dealt with that so strongly in chapter nine. The man born blind, was healed. When the Pharisees asked what happened, he said, “I once was blind, now I can see.” There's no disputing that. But Jesus ends up that conversation with the religious leaders saying, “The problem is you think you can see, and because of that, you're blind. You just refuse to see what's obvious.”

It's a good reminder that what we've learned throughout our study in the Gospel of John, is that religion doesn't necessarily lead people to God. Actually, it often becomes the very barrier of people getting to God. These religious leaders were so caught up in their own self-righteousness, in their own power and position, that they were *unwilling*, and eventually *unable*, to see what was obviously true.

The idea then of this is the **hardening of the heart**. So what does that mean? A good example—a familiar example—is the Bible says that God hardened Pharaoh's heart, back when Moses and the children of Israel were in Egypt. So here's the question. “Did God harden Pharaoh's heart?” And the answer is, “Yes, and No.” (I know that's very helpful. I like to be helpful, but it is Yes and No.) What does that mean? If you go back and study the story, what happened is: God, through Moses, revealed Himself to the Pharaoh. In plague, after plague, after plague, He clearly demonstrated His power. Pharaoh, in each of those moments, had to decide whether he believed that the God of the Hebrews is the one true God or not. But every time he chose to say, “No,” his heart got a little harder. He got in a little deeper. We would probably say he's digging himself into a hole, and with each day, the hole got deeper. So he denies and he denies and he denies. He gets in so deep that it would take so much to finally say, “I've been wrong. I believe,” that ultimately his heart got so hard, that he was unwilling to see what was obviously true. And that hardening of his heart actually ended up costing him his own son in the final plague at the Passover. So it's interesting that that's coming up in this season of Passover. So we're back to the question, “Did God harden Pharaoh's heart?” Well, in a sense He did. By revealing Himself, by making himself known to Pharaoh, Pharaoh had to make a decision that either that's true, or it's not. And every time he made a decision, he was either going to repent and believe, or his heart was going to get harder and harder and harder.

Now, honestly, this shouldn't be that difficult to understand. Any of us as parents, for example, who have raised teenagers, we've had these conversations with our kids. When we're in some sort of an argument, and they're determined to insist that they're right, no matter what you say, no matter what evidence you provide, they just keep digging their heels in deeper and deeper. We would say they just keep digging themselves deeper and deeper into a hole. It finally reaches the point where they're determined not to admit they're wrong. It just gets kind of silly that it reaches that level. But that's that same idea that with each defense of ourselves, we get deeper and deeper in this hole.

You see it all the time today in politics, where people insist that their particular position is right and it reaches a point where no matter what happens, no matter what evidence is there, no matter what anybody says or shows them, they're going to dig in deeper and deeper and deeper. They won't admit that something is true, and it finally reaches a point where you can't admit that you're just in too deep. Well, that's exactly what the text is talking about.

So move from Pharaoh to Isaiah. Did God harden the hearts of the people of Judah? The answer is, “Yes, and No.” Yes, by sending Isaiah the prophet, revealing the words and the works of God, the people had to either acknowledge they were wrong, and repent, and turn back to God, or stubbornly resist. But with each of these messages and revelations, they kept digging themselves deeper and deeper into a hole. They were unwilling to admit that what Isaiah was saying was true. They reached a point where they had become blind. They reached a point where their hearts had become so hard, it didn't matter what Isaiah was going to say; it didn't matter what he was going to do. They weren't going to see it; they weren't going to hear it. So, in that sense, they could not believe. They had reached a point, because of their own choices and behavior, where they were no longer willing to acknowledge what was obviously true.

So then this moves to the first century conversation with the Jews, and particularly the religious leaders. It started early on in chapter 1 with the question, “Are you the Messiah?” But now we've reached a point that Jesus does something so obviously miraculous as raising someone from the dead, and they're unwilling to even consider the possibility this could be the Messiah. Now, because of their own choices, they have dug a hole so deep that it's just not possible to admit they're wrong, and this actually *is* the Messiah. So, this is the fulfillment of what was predicted. They've become blind to what is obviously true. Their hearts have become hard to what Jesus has to say to them. So that's the case that John is making by quoting Isaiah. He says:

These things Isaiah said because he saw His glory, and he spoke of Him. (Vs. 41)

So this is an amazing part of the text. In Isaiah chapter 6, what John quotes in verse 40 is verse 10. But what precedes that is one of the most familiar parts of the book of Isaiah—when Isaiah has this remarkable vision of God. He sees God in this vision: God as the Lord Almighty. He's the God of the armies of Israel. It's a spectacular scene where God is three times “**Holy, Holy, Holy**”, and Isaiah is so overwhelmed with the wonder and the awesomeness and the terror of God, that he falls on his face and he literally says, “I am undone; I am ruined; I am unraveled, and it's in that moment that God reaches down, and picks him up. God essentially is looking for a prophet that He can send to Judah with His message, and Isaiah hears that—so don't miss that—he *hears* that, and he *obeys*. He says, “Here am I. Send me.” So even though the people were blind and deaf to the truths of God, Isaiah has this amazing moment and it's based on his view of the glory of God and what he now knows to be true, that he's willing to take the message to the people. What else is interesting about that is he knows in advance because God tells him, “They won't listen; they won't like it. They will despise you, and they will reject you.” But Isaiah is willing to go because he has seen the glory of God and he believes, and I think that is what impassioned his message to the people when John says in verse 41: **These things Isaiah said, because he saw His glory and spoke of Him.**

It's obvious then from verse 42, that the pronoun Him is referring to Jesus Himself. So what John just said is that when Isaiah saw that magnificent vision of God, in Isaiah chapter 6, he was seeing the pre-incarnate Christ. He was seeing Jesus before Jesus took on human flesh. Before Jesus became flesh, we call it the *pre-incarnate Christ*. We learned in John chapter 1, verses 1 through 3, that Jesus is the eternal Son of God, the forever member of the Trinity—fully God in every way. God the Father,

God the Son, God the Spirit chose Jesus to become flesh in order to reveal God. Verse 14 says, **The Word became flesh, dwelt among us, and He revealed His glory.**

So John is saying that Isaiah actually saw the pre-incarnate Christ, who has now come in all of His glory, and this is who they are rejecting. But part of the message here is, “But Isaiah didn't reject Him.” Isaiah saw His glory. He understood; he believed. There would be a temptation here to say, “Well, again, with election and predestination, God made it so that people couldn't see and couldn't believe.” But that's not what John says. As a matter of fact, it's not what he's been saying all the way through. The whole point of the *book of signs* is, “Here is the evidence. These are the miracles. This is what Jesus said. This is what Jesus has done.” The whole idea in verse 36 of literally commanding; it's an imperative. Commanding people to believe implies that people can't choose to obey. They could believe; of course they could! This isn't a matter that the people couldn't believe because God was somehow preventing that. That would be contrary to everything we've learned. But rather it's the idea that John has laid out his case, and while the majority will not believe—they will not hear the message; they will not choose to follow—there are those that heard and believed. Verse 42:

Nevertheless many even of the rulers believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they were not confessing Him, for fear that they would be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God. (Vs. 42-43)

Nevertheless many of the rulers believe. That means members of the Sanhedrin, the very group that's going to condemn Jesus to death. Deep in their own heart and spirit, they did believe. It's obvious that Jesus is the Messiah, but because of this fear of the Pharisees, this fear of being put out of the synagogue, it's the exact same thing that happened to the blind man that was healed. That was the fear, that the religious crowd is going to put them out of the synagogue, and John summarizes it by saying **they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God.** The English translation here actually kind of misses the wordplay. The word **approval** in verse 43 is the exact same word translated **glory** in verse 41. When Isaiah saw the *glory of Jesus* in his vision, that's what compelled him to believe and to obey. So what John is saying is, “Actually the glory dwelt among us, and most rejected Him, but some believed. But sadly, they loved the glory of men more than the glory of God. So for the most part, they remained quiet.

We learn later that Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea would be two that believed. The book of Acts says many more believed after the resurrection. There's a good reminder in that text that we really have to wrestle with. Are we going to live our lives primarily for the approval of men, or for the approval of God? Am I going to live for the glory of God, or for the glory of men? It's a miserable place to try and live in the middle of that, and one of the things we have to decide is, “Do I believe this or not and, if I believe it, then what does it look like to live this out?” Verse 44 then, to the end of the chapter, is really a summary of many of the things that Jesus has taught. I think John just uses this to come to some conclusion to this *Book of Signs*, and then he shifts gears pretty dramatically in chapter 13.

And Jesus cried out and said, “He who believes in Me, does not believe in Me but in Him who sent Me. He who sees Me sees the One who sent Me. I have come as Light into the world, so that everyone who believes in Me will not remain in darkness.” (Vs. 44-46)

So we've heard this message before. Jesus has told them again and again that He is sent from the Father; He and the Father are one. If you believe in Jesus, you believe in the Father; believe in the Father, you believe in Jesus. You simply can't have God without Jesus. Jesus has said, "I'm the gate." "I'm the door." "I'm the only way in." It is interesting that Jesus said that He has **come as Light so that everyone who believes in Me will not remain in darkness.** We saw this in John chapter 3. Jesus said, "It's not that one day we will be judged; we are already judged." We are born sinners. We're judged from the moment of birth. Our sin separates us from God. We walk in darkness. That's why Jesus had to come. That's why we need to be rescued; that's why we need to be saved. The idea is we are already in darkness until we choose Jesus. We don't have to remain in the darkness. He's come to deliver us, but to experience that deliverance, to walk in the Light, requires believing in Jesus.

"If anyone hears My sayings and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world." (Vs. 47)

Jesus told us the same thing in chapter 3. The reality is, if Jesus came to judge, that's all He would have done 24/7—the whole time He was on earth. There's no shortage of things to judge. But that's not why He came. He came to save the world. That was His mission. He came to rescue sinners, in order that we might experience forgiveness and have a relationship with God. But that doesn't mean there is no judgment.

"He who rejects Me and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him on the last day. For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me a commandment *as to what to say and what to speak.* I know that His commandment is eternal life; therefore the things I speak, I speak just as the Father has told Me." (Vs. 48-50)

So again, this is a summary of the consistent teaching of Jesus. He's been sent by the Father in order to exegete, or reveal, the Father. The Father has commanded Him to do this mission in order to fulfill His promise all the way back in Genesis 3:15, and to once again bring life out of death and provide eternal life. So Jesus is saying this is the mission of the Father. This is what He commanded Me. I've been faithful both to proclaim the truth and will be faithful all the way to the cross to fulfill the mission because I know this is about eternal life. This is the only possibility people have for forgiveness and life. He says earlier that yes, He did not come to judge, but there will be a judgment in the last day, and essentially what He says is, "The judge will be the truth!" What will the judgment be? The judgment will be the truth—will be His words. The judgment will be what He has said is true, and the basis of salvation.

So there's a reminder at the end of the story. People are free to have their own opinion. People are free to believe what they want to believe. People are free to believe all roads lead to God. People are free to believe there is no God. People are free to believe they have their own way to God. But once you get to the end of the story, the judge is the truth, the truth as it's been explained by Jesus—and that's the standard.

Dallas Willard used to say, "Reality is what you bump into when you're wrong. You can believe whatever you want, but at the end of the story, what you hit is reality and that's going to be the basis of judgment." Now, I know over the years that people are going to say, "I don't like that. God is so... God is so mean! You know, He's so judgmental. Why does God have to be like that? Why can't God just love us? But here's the deal. Jesus isn't mean. He isn't judgmental; that's not been the story. The story has been we have sinned; we have rebelled; we have made a mess of things. We, as a result, are separated

from God with no hope. The only chance we have is for Jesus Himself—the Son of God—to take on human flesh and come to the rescue. He knew before He ever came that He would be despised and rejected. He knew that He would be tortured and nailed to a cross. He knew all that ahead of time, that was the mission. But He chose to be obedient to that mission, in order to pay the debt of sin, in order to offer salvation, freely, graciously, mercifully, as a gift. That's not being mean. That's not being judgy. That's as gracious and merciful and loving as He could possibly be—and He offers that to everyone freely as a gift.

John has warned us that every time we're exposed to this truth and we choose to say, “No,” our hearts get a little bit harder. It's going to be more likely we're going to say, “No,” the next time and the next time, until we reach a point where we no longer can see the truth; we no longer can hear the truth. Our hearts have gotten so much harder, we don't even hear it anymore. Sometimes I hear people say that when we say that Jesus is the only way, they'll say something like, “Well, what about all these people in tribes and jungles and people that have never heard?” Well, first of all, you don't know that that's true. God loves those people in that jungle, and if He sent His son to die for them, I'm confident God has His ways of getting them the message. So first of all, that's an assumption that I think probably isn't true. But second of all, history records that when the message finally comes to these people, they're often quick to respond. That's why whole villages, whole areas immediately come to Christ—because the news is such good news! They haven't become blinded; their hearts haven't become hardened. They actually are very responsive to the message. The concern, according to John, is not someone, somewhere, in a tribe, in a jungle. It's people like us, as Americans that have become so saturated with this message, we don't hear it anymore. You have it on the internet. You have it on television, in bookstores, in churches! You have it every way imaginable, and people hear it and reject it so much that little by little they become blind to what's obviously true. They become hardened to what's clearly the message of the gospel. That's the concern of John.

So, here's what I would say. Perhaps you're listening today, and you have never trusted Jesus as Savior. If you hear what I'm saying, if you understand what I'm saying, it's not too late. Your heart is not too hard. Your eyes are not too blind. But every time you say, “No,” it's more likely the next time you're going to say no again, and what's at stake is your eternal soul. I would plead with you to consider what we've talked about and choose to believe. For those of us that have trusted Jesus as Savior, we really need to think about, “Do we live more for the approval of men or more for the approval of God?” Years ago I settled this idea. If I'm going to be a preacher of the gospel, people are going to laugh at me. They're going to make fun of me. They're going to criticize me. They're going to attack me. That just comes with the business, and I had to make a decision, “Is this going to be about the approval of God or is this going to be about the approval of men?” I challenge you to follow me in choosing to live for the approval of God. John has laid out the story. Here are the signs. Here's what Jesus has said. Here's the evidence. Now it's up to you. You can choose to believe it or not.

Our Father, we're so thankful that You love us so much, You sent Jesus to die for us, and You have made this message abundantly clear to those who choose to listen and believe. Lord, may that be true of everyone who hears this message. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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Believe it or Not
That You May Believe
John 12:37-50
Pastor Bryan Clark

1. This passage opens with a statement indicating Jesus had performed many signs, but the people did not believe in Him.

→ There is a mystery to how God's sovereignty works in conjunction with human responsibility. He does His part and people are responsible for their part. **What are some evidences in this text that people still had the freedom to believe or not?**

→ **Are there people in your life that struggle to believe in Jesus? What do you think is keeping them from believing?**

2. In verses 42-43, Jesus talks about people who believed in him but not publicly because of fear of the Pharisees. They loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God.

→ **In your life when have you struggled with wanting the approval of people rather than the approval of God? Why do you think that is?**

→ **What would it look like for you to live for the approval of God more than the approval of people? What are some specific examples?**

3. In verses 44-45, Jesus talks about his relationship with his Father and that to see Jesus is to see the Father. This idea is found in other places in scripture as well.

→ **Read John 14:7-10, Hebrews 1:1-3, Colossians 1:13-15.**

→ **How does this idea and these verses help you understand what the Father is like?**

→ **Is there anything you need to change about your view of the Father? If so, how can you go about changing your view?**

4. In verse 46, Jesus refers to himself as the light that has come into the world so that people will not remain in darkness. This section of John's gospel is Jesus last public appeal to believe in Him. *Take a few moments to reflect on the following questions.*

→ **Do you believe Jesus is the Savior of the world? Why do you believe that?**

→ **Have you had a personal experience of Jesus shining light into your life and leading you out of darkness? Would you be willing to share a bit about this experience with your group?**