



Hard Hearts | John 12:37-50

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In John 12:37-50, the apostle John addressed the question of why Israel rejected Jesus Christ and offered a closing appeal that urged all who hear the gospel to respond to it in faith and obedience.

Background: The rejection of Jesus Christ by the nation of Israel was a glaring reality during the first century. It tempted skeptics to question whether something was wrong with Jesus or with His gospel.

- 1. The fact of Israel's rejection (12:37).**

- 2. The foretelling of Israel's rejection (12:38 and Isaiah 53:1).**

- 3. The fulfillment of Israel's rejection (12:39-40; Isaiah 6:8-10, 1:2-4; Ezekiel 16).**

Judicial hardening – a divine judgment against stubborn rebellion that leads to a hardening of the unbeliever's heart.

God does not randomly choose nations or even individuals FOR unbelief. Unbelief is the natural state of every human being. We all entered life in rebellion against our Creator.

4. **The compelling power of the glory of God vs a self-centered desire to receive personal glory (12:41-43).**
5. **Three elements of the final summary of the public ministry of Jesus Christ (12:44-50).**
 - **Whoever**
 - **Jesus = God**
 - **The power of God's truth to judge and to give life**

Questions to Consider

1. Why might Israel's rejection of Jesus Christ be a matter that both John and Paul (Romans 9-11) had to address?
2. Read Isaiah 53 and note all of the ways that Jesus Christ fulfilled this prophecy. What is the significance of John (12:38) quoting Isaiah 53:1?
3. Based on Isaiah 1:2-4 (cf. Ezekiel 16:1-43), what did Israel do at some point after God had lovingly adopted the nation? Are there practical ways in which you disregard the love and mercy that God has shown you?
4. Judicial hardening is a theological term that arises out of passages like this one in John 12, along with Romans 9:14-18, and the account of God's dealing with the Egyptian Pharaoh (Exodus 4-9). Do you agree that these passages teach the concept of judicial hardening? If so, how would you respond to someone who says that God is acting capriciously? How might the "whoever" in the appeal of Jesus in 12:44-50 also respond to such a charge?
5. How have you recently been tempted to conceal your faith for fear of being unpopular?
6. Jesus urged people to hear *and* keep God's Word? What's the difference between those two and how do people around you see you guarding/treasuring/keeping the words of Jesus Christ?