

Armagh Baptist Church – Sunday 28th February 2010
‘Your Last Chance to Respond to Jesus?’
John ch.12:37-50

Introduction

Nobody knows if this really will be your last chance to respond to Jesus or not. However it could be. Come with me to look at a few verses for a moment:

Genesis 6:3 – That verse is often quoted from the AV – *‘My Spirit will not always strive with man...’* and the impression is given that God’s Spirit may speak to us, strive with us, challenge us and convict us of our sin, for a limited period of time, and then there comes a time when God will no longer speak to us. That may well be true, but the original context of this verse was the warning that in 120 years time, God was going to send a Flood on the earth, which would destroy all mankind, indeed all of creation, that was outside of the Ark – God’s only means of salvation in those days.

In vs.5-8 God goes on to spell out his plans for judgement of the world and why. Only Noah found favour with God – only Noah experienced God’s grace. And so 120 years later, the flood-waters came, and only Noah, his wife, his 3 sons and their wives were saved from God’s Judgement at that time.

Romans 1:18-32 – This passage is speaking not of the days of Noah’s Flood, but it is speaking of our day and generation, as we wait God’s final judgement to be out-poured on this world – not a judgement of flood, but of fire!

First of all I want you to notice the little phrase in v.20 and again in Rom 2:1 –

‘Men are without excuse’ (Rom 1:20)
‘You, therefore, have no excuse’ (Rom 2:1)

And then I want you to notice a phrase that occurs 3 times in this passage:

*(v.24) – ‘Therefore **God gave them over...**’*

*(v.26) – ‘Because of this, **God gave them over...**’*

*(v.28) - ‘Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, **he gave them over** to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done.’*

So this passage certainly gives us the impression, that there comes a time when God runs out of patience on us. There comes a time when He *‘gives us over’* to the path that we ourselves have chosen. To use the language of Genesis 6:3 – there comes a time when God’s Spirit stops striving with us. There comes a moment when God may stop speaking, when God gives us over. And the concerning thing is that none of us knows when that moment may come for each one us. So this could be your last opportunity to respond to Christ in faith.

John ch.12:37-50 is the last chance Jesus gave to the people of his day to trust in Him before he went to the cross.

This was his last *public* address, before his arrest.

(N.B. John chs. 13-17 is private teaching – given only to his disciples.)

In vs.20-33 Jesus has just predicted his death by crucifixion once again, and has given clear insight as to what he saw as the significance of his death for us:

1. It would be like a grain of wheat falling into the ground and dying.

In so doing He would bring forth a great harvest of souls for eternal life.

2. It would be his moment of glorification, not his humiliation, because this was the very reason he had come – he was born to die for the sins of mankind.

3. It would be his lifting up on the cross, to draw all men to himself.

So we saw each of those three views that Jesus had of his own death last Sunday night.

But what do we read of the people's response in the next few verses?

v.34 - They couldn't cope with the idea that the one they thought was going to be their Messiah King, was going to be "lifted up" and nailed to a cross to die. Their last question was still, "*Who is this Son of Man?*" - Was it really Jesus? He was just so far removed from their idea of what the Messiah was going to do for them, that they were already looking for another! There was no way that Jesus measured up to their view of the Son of Man, their view of a Messiah!

But notice what Jesus says as He speaks to them for the last time (v.35-36):

*"You are going to have **the light** just a little while longer"*

What had Jesus called himself back in John 8:12 & John 9:5?

'I am the Light of the World...'

Well, now He's warning them in vs.35 that darkness is about to descend, as he leaves this scene of time. When I leave, He says, you'll not know where you are going. You'll be groping around in spiritual darkness all over again! If only they had listened to what He had said back in John 8:12

'I am the Light of the World. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.'

Or John 9:5

'While I am in the World, I am the Light of the World.'

But soon he would be gone, and they would be in spiritual darkness again!

So he gives them their last chance to respond in v.36:-

***“Put your trust in the light while you have it,
so that you may become sons of light.”***

This was their last chance to trust in Him, as He stood before them.

All they had to do to step out of spiritual darkness and confusion, and to step into the light and into the truth, and into eternal life, was to simply

“Put their trust in Him.”

It couldn't have been simpler. He wasn't asking them to do anything hard.

If He had asked them to do something difficult they would have probably tried to do it. But it wasn't difficult, it was simple and straightforward. –

“Put your trust in Jesus!”

This was their big opportunity, this was their last chance, but look what happened (v.36)

*“When he had finished speaking, Jesus left and **hid himself from them.**”*

When the light is hidden from you, you're left in darkness – and that's exactly what happened here. Jesus left, **he hid himself from them**, and they were left in darkness.

We came across this phrase before in John 8:59 - '*Jesus hid himself.*'

It was just after Jesus had said, '*Before Abraham was, I am*' the Jews had reacted by trying to stone him, because they knew he was claiming to be God. But now he really was going to be hidden from them – for good!

That idea of Jesus hiding from these people, takes me back to the Garden of Eden. Do you remember in Genesis ch.3 when Adam & Eve had sinned against God by disobeying Him and eating of the forbidden fruit, what do we read in Genesis 3:7-10? The Bible begins with mankind hiding from God because of sin – because of the Fall.

It also reminds me of a little phrase in Isaiah ch.53:3

*‘He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, **and we hid, as it were, our faces from him!***

So that verse, speaking of Christ bearing the punishment of our sin, tells us that we hid as it were our faces from him! It should have been the other way around. He had just hid himself from us, because he had been despised and rejected by men, and yet just a few days later, he would take upon himself the sins of the world, and in those three hours of darkness he would be hidden from his Father, even as we hid our faces from him! In other words, He was totally abandoned as he died on the cross – because of our sins.

What about you? Are you hiding from Christ tonight? Are you running away from Him tonight, or are you searching for Jesus tonight. If you want to be

saved, it's simple – all you have to do is *'Put your trust in the Light while you still have it'* (v.36) *'Put your trust in Jesus.'* - Don't miss this opportunity.

But in a sense we shouldn't be surprised at this open rejection of Jesus while he was here on earth (v.37-41):-

(i) It was just what Isaiah, the OT Prophet, had predicted.

* All Jesus' teaching with such authority didn't convince them.

* All His fulfilment of O.T. prophecy didn't convince them.

* Even His miraculous signs didn't convince them.

- *"They still **would not** believe in Him."* (v.37).

It wasn't that there wasn't enough evidence, because there was.

It was just that they stubbornly **would not** believe in Him.

It was a question of their rebellious wills, not their unconvinced minds.

They **refused** to believe – just as Isaiah had prophesied (v.38) (Isaiah 53:1). Because of this, God gave them over to more and more stubborn and hardened hearts, until the point came that they **could not** believe (v.39).

They had continued in their unbelief and hardness of heart for too long, and God gave them up to blinded eyes, deadened hearts, and rebellious wills. (v.40) (Isaiah 6:10). All this had been predicted by Isaiah (v.41). So here the Apostle John is telling us plainly that Isaiah was able to see ahead into the future to see Jesus' glory and to testify or speak about Him.

(ii) So we shouldn't be surprised that it still happens in our day.

But it's a dangerous position to get into. To go on rejecting Christ wilfully for so long, that you become so hard in heart that God actually gives up on you, and gives you over to the way that you have chosen to go.

N.B. When that happens, you have nobody to blame but yourself!

(iii) But there was a second group who believed in Jesus privately, but were afraid to confess Him publicly (v.42-43)

John tells us that at the same time as Jesus was being openly rejected, there were others who secretly believed in Him, but so far had not come out into the open (v.42).

John specifically tells us that many of these were among the leaders of the Jewish religion. In fact in other places John gives us the names of 2 of them: Nicodemus (John 3:1, John 7:50) and Joseph of Arimathea (John 19:38-42).

There are two parts to true faith in Jesus Christ according to Romans 10:9-10

- *Believing* it in your heart, and
- *Confessing* it with your mouth.

In fact Romans 10:9 puts it the other way around to what we would expect:

- The confessing with your mouth that 'Jesus is Lord' comes first.
- The believing in your heart that God has raised Jesus from the dead, comes second!

The explanation is given to us in the next verse: v.10

*'For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified,
and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.'*

So the confessing your faith with your mouth, is just as important, if not more important, than believing it in your heart.

These men, such as Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea were prepared to do the first, at this point in the story, but not the second. They had come to believe that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of God, in their hearts, but they weren't yet prepared to confess publicly that they were followers of Jesus.

Why? (Well John tells us in v.42):

- Because they feared the Pharisees would put them out of their synagogues.
- Because they loved the praise of men, more than praise from God.

They were afraid of what others would think of them.

They were more concerned about their own reputations, and how they would look in the eyes of others.

They feared being ostracised by the communities in which they lived.

"The fear of man brings a snare." (Proverbs 29:25)

But maybe that describes you exactly tonight?

Maybe you believe the Gospel is true in your heart.

Maybe you believe that Jesus is the Messiah, that He is the Son of God, that He is the Saviour of the World, but you're just more concerned about what others will think of you, instead of what Jesus will think about you?

If so, listen to what Jesus says to you in vs.44-46:

Don't stay in the darkness, come out into the light and believe openly in Jesus.

If you have heard the Gospel, and still refuse to believe, listen to this: (v.47-50).

Jesus doesn't judge or condemn you; He still wants to save you.
But this Gospel you have heard tonight; will condemn you then!

Conclusion

If this was your last chance to trust in Christ, what would you do with it?

What you do with Christ determines what God will do with you then (v.48).

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