

Epilogue to the Book of Signs

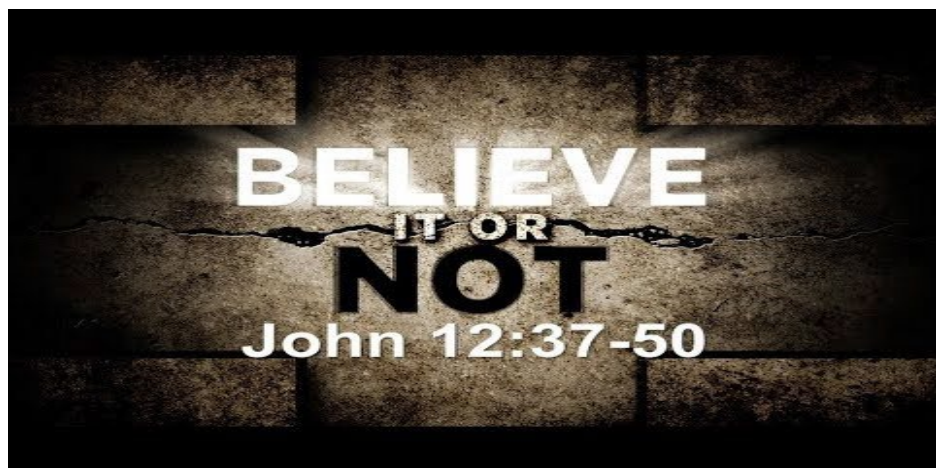
John 12.37-50

John begins his gospel calling Jesus the Word who was in the beginning and is God, then records miracles that displayed His deity. Throughout John 1-12, Jesus invites everyone to believe in Him and receive eternal life. Many did, but most did not. This is John's summary and 'last call'!

Despite Jesus' miracles, many did not believe (37-41)

Despite believing in Jesus, many did not confess Him (42-43)

Despite the rejection of many, eternal life is offered to all (44-50)



1. Three groups of people, each with a different response to Jesus, are referenced in these final verses before John zeroes in on the events of the night Jesus was betrayed, and what followed. This 'epilogue' evaluates responses by Jews to Jesus' ministry, then concludes with an undesignated closing invitation, perhaps a summary of messages Jesus preached throughout His ministry. The first group of people John mentions is those who, despite Jesus' miracles, did not believe in Him (37). John then cites Isaiah 53.1, from the prophet's famous foretelling of the Suffering Servant (Isa. 53.1-12): What does this rhetorical question (38) suggest about how many believed in Jesus? What do you think kept people from believing in Jesus?
2. Verses 39-40 are used by theologians to support the idea that some people *cannot* believe in Jesus, because God determined in eternity past that they wouldn't. Is this what Jesus was saying? V.39 begins with the words, "For this reason..."; for *what* reason? Why couldn't they believe in Jesus? What evidences did they refuse to believe (see John 12.37)? *As a result of their willful rejection*, what did God do to them (v40, quoting Isaiah 6.10)? Can you think of other examples where people *refused to* believe despite clear evidence, so in the end they *could not* believe? See Exod. 9.12; Matt. 13.14-15; Rom. 1.24, 26, 28; and 2 Thes. 2.8-12.
3. Verses 42-43 state that while most rejected Jesus, many of the rulers did believe in Him. Can you think of any of these? Why didn't they publicly confess their faith in Him? They were believers, and thus had eternal life; what was the impact of them keeping their faith in Jesus a secret? What would they lose as a result of doing this?
4. Verses 44-50 seem to be a 'summary' appeal – a collection of things Jesus said in messages. What themes from His discourses in John can you identify? How does He identify Himself in relation to God the Father? How does He identify Himself in relation to the world? What was His mission (and what was *not* His mission; v47)? From where does Jesus say that His authority comes?