

## JOHN 12:37-43

**“But though He had performed so many signs before them, yet they were not believing in Him. 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?’ [Isaiah 53:1] 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’ [Isaiah 6:10]. These things Isaiah said because he saw His glory, and he spoke of Him. 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.”**

Having just admonished His audience to believe in Him, while Yeshua was still personally present with them as the light (John 12:35-36), it was sadly to be reported, “Even though he had performed so many miracles in their presence, they still did not put their trust in him” (John 12:37, CJB/CJSB). The Apostle John does not just say this as one who apparently observed this taking place; the prophecies of Isaiah are appealed to. These include famed word of Isaiah 53:1, as Yeshua being the arm of the Lord was not believed (John 12:38). It also included an appeal to the prophetic commissioning of Isaiah, and in how being sent to Ancient Israel, many would not be able to hear the message he declared, because of an inability to receive it. Notwithstanding some of the textual issues present between the Hebrew Masoretic Text, Greek Septuagint, and what is quoted in John 12:40 with adaptations likely made—the rejection of Yeshua’s message is associated to how the Prophet Isaiah was broadly rejected centuries earlier:

**“In the year of King Uzziah's death I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple. Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called out to another and said, ‘Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory.’ And the foundations of the thresholds trembled at the voice of him who called out, while the temple was filling with smoke. Then I said, ‘Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.’ Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a burning coal in his hand, which he had taken from the altar with tongs. He touched my mouth *with it* and said, ‘Behold, this has touched your lips; and your iniquity is taken away and your sin is forgiven.’ Then I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, ‘Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?’ Then I said, ‘Here am I. Send me!’ He said, ‘Go, and tell this people: “Keep on listening, but do not perceive; keep on looking, but do not understand.” **Render the hearts of this people insensitive, their ears dull, and their eyes dim, otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and return and be healed**”’ (Isaiah 6:1-10).**

What is really quite intriguing about the Apostle John referring to Isaiah 6, goes beyond Yeshua’s ministry being widely rejected or dismissed; it is asserted, “Isaiah said these things because he saw His glory and spoke of Him” (John 12:41, TLV). How is one to approach the possessive pronoun and pronoun? When reviewing the encounter that the Prophet Isaiah had in Isaiah ch. 6 (Isaiah 6:1-8 has been addressed previously), it is witnessed that the only entity who Isaiah could be regarded as seeing or encountering the glory of, is the LORD or YHWH:

- “In the year of King Uzziah's death I saw the Lord sitting on a throne [*v'ere'eh et-Adonai yosheiv al-kisei*, **יְשַׁב עַל־כִּסֵּא יְהוָה אֹתִי אֲדֹנָי**], lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple” (Isaiah 6:1).

- “And one called out to another and said, ‘Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory [*qadosh qadosh qadosh YHWH Tzevaot melo kol-ha’eretz kevodo*, קְדוֹשׁ קְדוֹשׁ קְדוֹשׁ יְהוָה יְהוָה זָבֵאוֹת כְּלֵאֵי כְבוֹדוֹ]” (Isaiah 6:3).

So, when it is narrated of the Prophet Isaiah that “he saw His glory, and he spoke of Him” (John 12:41), who is being spoken of, within the wider context of John 12:37-43? John 12:42 notably continues, stating, “Nevertheless many even of the authorities believed in him, but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it, lest they should be put out of the synagogue” (John 12:42, RSV). Here, when readers encounter “many even of the rulers believed in Him,” the pronoun obviously refers to Yeshua the Messiah. Contextually, when readers see “he saw His glory, and he spoke of Him...many even of the rulers believed in Him,” this is all in reference to Yeshua the Messiah. The statements made here certainly need to be catalogued as they concern the nature and origins of Yeshua.

Some commentators simply offer a number of different interpretive options for these statements,<sup>204</sup> whereas some do not conclude that the glory being referred to in John 12:41-42 is that of Yeshua the Messiah.<sup>205</sup> However, it cannot go unnoticed that there are indeed examiners, who forthrightly conclude, that the glory of God witnessed by the Prophet Isaiah is intended to be the actual glory of a pre-existent Yeshua the Messiah in Heaven:

- George R. Beasley-Murray: “The glory of God that Isaiah saw in his vision (Is 6:1-4) is identified with the glory of the Logos-Son, in accordance with 1:18 and 17:5.”<sup>206</sup>
- Colin G. Kruse: “The evangelist implies that what Isaiah saw in the temple was in fact ‘Jesus’ glory’, *i.e.* the glory of the pre-existent Christ. There are other NT...writings which imply the pre-incarnate Christ appeared in OT times. Paul speaks of the rock in the wilderness from which the water gushed as Christ (1 Cor. 10:4).”<sup>207</sup>
- Bruce Milne: “John may be thinking of the pre-incarnate Christ (*cf.* so Paul in 1 Cor. 10:4), either as part of the divine glory in Isaiah 6:1f., or as foreshadowed in the sacrifice on the altar by which the prophet was cleansed (Is. 6:6-7). This Sent One cannot be confined to the period of his earthly mission. He is eternal, and the glory he reveals is the glory of ‘the One and Only, who is at the Father’s side’ (1:18), which he shared with the Father ‘before the world began’ (17:5).”<sup>208</sup>

With the Tanach background of Isaiah 6:1, 3 in view, it is significant if John 12:41-42 is representative of the Prophet Isaiah witnessing Yeshua the Messiah’s glory. Not only does this serve as strong evidence of a pre-existent Messiah, present in the dimension of Heaven—but it would also serve as strong proof of Yeshua being integrated into the Divine Identity. The NIV/TNIV/2011 NIV is notably reflective of this: “Isaiah said this because he saw Jesus’ glory and spoke about him.”<sup>209</sup> The Phillips New Testament similarly has, “Isaiah said these things because he saw the glory of Christ, and spoke about him.”

<sup>204</sup> Carson, *John*, pp 449-450.

<sup>205</sup> Köstenberger, pp 391-392.

<sup>206</sup> Beasley-Murray, 217.

<sup>207</sup> Kruse, *John*, 275.

<sup>208</sup> Milne, 194; also Michaels, 711.

<sup>209</sup> Also the Common English Bible: “Isaiah said these things because he saw Jesus’ glory; he spoke about Jesus.”