

John 12:39

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again,

Analysis

John explains why they 'could not believe'—not mere inability but judicial hardening. The 'therefore' connects their unbelief to divine sovereignty expressed in Isaiah's prophecy. This introduces divine hardening as consequence of persistent rejection, raising profound questions about human responsibility and divine sovereignty. The statement doesn't exonerate unbelief but explains it: God hardens those who persistently reject light. This demonstrates the Reformed doctrine of reprobation—God gives some over to their chosen rebellion. Their inability stems from moral corruption, not mere intellectual confusion.

Historical Context

Paul uses similar language in Romans 9-11, explaining Israel's unbelief as divine judicial hardening after repeated rejection. This pattern appears throughout Scripture (Ex 9:12; Is 6:9-10).

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How do divine sovereignty and human responsibility coexist in unbelief?
2. What does judicial hardening teach about the seriousness of rejecting divine revelation?
3. In what ways does persistent rejection of light result in increased blindness?

Interlinear Text

διὰ	τοῦτο	οὐκ	ἠδύναντο	πιστεύειν	ὅτι	πάλιν	εἶπεν
G1223	Therefore	not	they could	believe	because	again	said
	G5124	G3756	G1410	G4100	G3754	G3825	G2036

Ἡσαΐας

that Esaias
G2268

Additional Cross-References

2 Peter 2:14 (Parallel theme): Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: an heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children:

John 10:38 (Faith): But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him.

John 5:44 (Faith): How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?