



IMMANUEL BAPTIST CHURCH

SERIES: JOHN (GOSPEL OF TRUTH)

LESSON: ULTIMATE SEPARATION –ULTIMATE UNION

JOHN 8:21-30

MAY 9, 2021

MAIN POINT

Jesus reveals His explicit and direct teachings on how one can die *in* his sin. There are implicit and opposite truths that show how one can die *to* his sin.

JOHN CONTEXT

Every lesson's purpose: "but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." John 20:31

Jesus had just concluded a discourse with the Jews about His nature as the Light of the world. The Jews questioned Jesus and challenged His claim that He was the Son of God. There was massive tension between the Jews and Christ. It was clear that the Jews had rejected Jesus as the Son of God. Jesus Himself said this in verse 19, when he said, "You know neither me nor my

Father. If you knew me, you would know my Father also.” Now, in verses 21-30, Jesus reveals to the Jews the consequences of rejecting Him as the Son of God. This passage seals the fate of many ignorant Jews. It is Jesus’ condemnation of a self-righteous and ignorant people that He came to save.

INTRODUCTION

Jesus’ approach to the Jews is not soft or cuddly. In fact, in what may seem a harsh tone to us, Jesus straightforwardly tells the Jews how to die *in* their sins and to reject salvation.

But in each of His condemnations, there is a converse truth that comes about. This converse truth is how one can die *to* his sins and abide in the Son. So, in our passage today:

1. Jesus reveals His explicit and direct teachings on how one can die *in* his sin.
2. There are implicit and opposite truths that show how one can die *to* his sin.

This might seem like an odd question, but if someone were to ask you, “How do I die in my sins, what would you say? (The rejection of God is innate in all men. Men refuse to acknowledge Christ as Lord and refuse to turn from their sins to God. This refusal to repent leads to eternal separation from God.)

Based on the answer to the previous question, how can a person then be saved? (Keep in mind that the answer to this question is the exact opposite of the answer to the previous question. Make this known to the group and have them use this concept in interpreting the passage. Since the rejection of God is innate in all men, salvation cannot be sought in the human sphere. Mankind must acknowledge Christ as Lord and turn from their sins to God. This repentance through faith is what saves a sinner.)

We see that the answers to these questions are the exact opposites. This is because the difference between salvation and damnation is the difference between life and death. There is no grey line in the matter of salvation. You are either for God or against Him! Jesus uses this concept in John 8:21-30. He shows the Jews how they can die *in* their sins, and as a result, shows them how to die *to* their sin. The two answers are the exact opposite of each other. Readers of this text should keep this in mind when reading.

EXPLANATION // ...believe Jesus is the Christ...

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 8:21 – THEN HE SAID AGAIN TO THEM, “I GO AWAY, AND YOU WILL SEEK ME, AND WILL DIE IN YOUR SIN; WHERE I AM GOING, YOU CANNOT COME.”

This passage reveals several critical truths:

1. That the Jews were ignorant: Jesus told the Jews *again*. He had been speaking with them for quite a time about His Sonship. Yet they still rejected Him! The Jews would continue to mock Jesus throughout the book of John.
2. That Jesus would leave: This is a sharp passage on the blindness and lameness of man's will! Jesus reveals that He will leave of His *own* accord. This statement is a testament to the nonexistent control that men have over the actions of God. Just as Jesus will die by his own will, He also will leave this world by His own will. Humans can do nothing to control when Jesus will come or go. The Jews sought control over their own salvation, but Jesus reiterates that *He* possesses *all* the control.
3. That the Jews will seek after a false Messiah: Jesus says, “*you will seek me, and you will die in your sin.*” It is likely that Jesus is referring to a time when after he ascends to heaven that the Jews will still be looking for a Messiah. Thus, Jesus does not mean that the Jews would seek after Jesus Himself. Instead, they would seek after another “Messiah.” And their hopes would be that their “Messiah” would fulfill their desires of legalistic and man-centered beliefs. The Jews attempted to grasp and grope in the darkness for a “Messiah.” They continue to seek another Messiah in this age! I once watched a news clip of hundreds of Jews singing for their “Messiah” to come. It saddened me as I realized that all those people were hell bound! This seeking of a false Messiah will lead to their ultimate deception in the End Times.
4. That men cannot come to Christ through their self-righteousness. Jesus said, “. . . where I am going, you cannot come.” Jesus has just finished talking about the false-righteousness of the Jews. Now He declares that this false righteousness will do nothing to save them. The Jews would attempt to come to salvation through their self-righteous deeds. We know this because, in the previous words of this verse, Jesus says: “You will seek me...”. We know that the Jews would seek salvation through the Law. Jesus is telling the people around Him that righteousness cannot be attained through that Law. This concept is further confirmed in Romans 9:30-31 which says that those who seek righteousness through the Law cannot obtain it. The Law was never meant to get rid of

sin. It was meant to make us aware of the debilitating nature of sin and our need for a Savior (Rom. 3:20).

What can we learn from the Jews' rejection of Jesus about the method of salvation? How can we be saved in light of the Jewish rejection? (Mankind must seek after the *true* Messiah. This Messiah is found in Christ the Son. Only belief in the Son will save. This is the whole point of John!! (see John 14:6; John 20:31).

Based on what we know about the impotence of our works, what can we learn about the method of salvation? (That works do not save and cannot save. Men must look upon the Son of God for salvation. There is no hope of salvation apart from Him (John 14:6).)

To summarize, here is Jesus' logical argument:

1. If you seek after a false Savior, this will lead to eternal separation from God.
2. If you seek out salvation through works, this will lead to eternal separation from God.
3. Therefore, turn *from your works* to the *true* Savior. The true Savior is the Son.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 8:22 – SO THE JEWS WERE SAYING, “SURELY HE WILL NOT KILL HIMSELF, WILL HE, SINCE HE SAYS, ‘WHERE I AM GOING, YOU CANNOT COME’?”

This passage reveals to us the ignorant and willful rejection of the Jews. This statement was not a legitimate question, it was a mockery of Jesus! In Jewish eyes, suicide was a particularly heinous sin. This mockery of Jesus was an affront to His Sonship. To accuse Jesus of planning to kill Himself would have:

1. Been accusing Him of being unstable and deranged.
2. Been accusing Him of being willing and able to commit suicide. This would mean that Jesus was sinful and unstable. These qualities are not qualities of the Son of God! The Jews just sought to tear down the claim that Jesus *was* the Son.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 8:23 – AND HE WAS SAYING TO THEM, “YOU ARE FROM BELOW, I AM FROM ABOVE; YOU ARE FROM THIS WORLD, I AM NOT OF THIS WORLD.”

This verse reveals a significant truth: That *because* humans are humans, they cannot come to God. We are from below. God is from above. We are of this world. God is not of this world. The distance between God’s holiness and man’s sinfulness is infinite and damning (Rom. 3:10-11).

A few other Scriptures convey a similar idea of the condemning effect of our sin:

1. We are *dead* in sin. Dead people can do nothing (Ephesians 2:1-3).
2. We are *not born again* before salvation. An unborn person can do nothing (John 3:3-8.)
3. We can do nothing apart from the Vine (John 15:5).

Because our hearts are so sinful and separated from God, we cannot even *hope* to seek Him. Men are neither able *nor* willing to seek God (Rom. 3:10-11). This is *because* of our own human nature. The heart is deceitful and wicked above all things! Who can understand it (Jer. 17:9)?

To summarize, here is Jesus’ logical argument in verse 23:

1. You are all human and may try to seek the kingdom of God.
2. Yet, *because* you are all human you *cannot* successfully seek the kingdom of God.
3. Therefore turn to the Son of God. It is in Him alone that salvation is found.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 8:24 – THEREFORE I SAID TO YOU THAT YOU WILL DIE IN YOUR SINS; FOR UNLESS YOU BELIEVE THAT I AM HE, YOU WILL DIE IN YOUR SINS.”

This statement sums up all of Jesus’ previous statements. Jesus makes it clear: if you believe in a different Messiah, you will die in your sins. Also, if you believe in self-righteous works, you will also die in your sins. Unless one believes that Jesus is the Messiah, then that person will die in his or her sins. Therefore, turn to the Son of God. HE WILL NOT FAIL YOU.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 8:25-27 – SO THEY WERE SAYING TO HIM, “WHO ARE YOU?” JESUS SAID TO THEM, “WHAT HAVE I BEEN SAYING TO YOU FROM THE BEGINNING? I HAVE MANY THINGS TO SPEAK AND TO JUDGE CONCERNING YOU, BUT HE WHO SENT ME IS TRUE; AND THE THINGS WHICH I HEARD FROM HIM, THESE I SPEAK TO THE WORLD.” THEY DID NOT REALIZE THAT HE WHAD BEEN SPEKAING TO THEM ABOUT THE FATHER.

The Jews again open their ignorant and foolish mouths. They ask Jesus “Who are You?” It seems that these legalistic vipers have ignored everything that Jesus has told them for the past weeks. This is what leads Jesus to ask this: “What have I been saying to you from the beginning?” He reiterates what He told them in John 5. He tells them that the Father sent Him to speak to the world. He sent Him to die in order to purchase a chosen people that would be zealous for good deeds. But the Jews did not realize that Jesus was speaking about the Father who had sent Him.

The Jews claimed to follow the Father (John 8:41). But we see that the Jews did not follow the Father *with their hearts*. Since the Jews rejected Christ, they, in turn, show their rejection of the Father (John 8:42). Therefore, we can see that the Jews were following a false god of their own making. This god was not the true God. Jesus told them earlier that their unbelief would condemn them. The Jews were being disobedient and rebellious to the Father who had sent the Son! Yet, if they would only believe in the Son, then they truly would worship and obey the Father.

NOTICE HOW ALL OF JESUS’ STATEMENTS POINT TO BELIEF IN HIMSELF AS THE SON.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 8:28 – SO JESUS SAID, “WHEN YOU LIFT UP THE SON OF MAN, THEN YOU WILL KNOW THAT I AM HE, AND I DO NOTHING ON MY OWN INITIATIVE, BUT I SPEAK THESE THING AS THE FATHER TAUGHT ME.”

This verse reveals one main truth to us: that the Jews would know of the Sonship of Christ at some point in the future. This is the Father’s ultimate plan: To seat the Son at His right hand, and to make His mercifulness and holiness known to all (Psalm 110).

The Future Exaltation of Christ: The Jews will know of the Sonship of Christ at some point in the future. This was fulfilled in the past and awaits fulfillment in the future.

1. Past Fulfillment: A vast multitude of Jews believed in Jesus as the Son after His Ascension. This took place during Pentecost (Acts 2:36-37).

2. Future Fulfillment: ALL ISRAEL will believe upon Christ at some point in the future. This statement awaits an eschatological fulfillment. (Romans 11:26 foretells the future salvation of all Israel. Zechariah 12:10 foretells the future lamentation of Israel as she realizes that she crucified her Messiah. This lamentation culminates in the salvation of Israel.

Jesus has demolished all of the arguments of the Jews. He has made their separation from Him known to all around Him. He has condemned them with His truth. But even in all this, Jesus foretells a future period of grace. A period where ultimate separation can be replaced with ultimate *union*. There is a small remnant of Jews that have a true knowledge of Jesus' Sonship. But soon, all of Israel will know. This is God's undeserved and unmerited grace to a people that have rejected Him for generations. The ultimate separation of some Jews has led to the ultimate union of both Gentiles *and* Jews to Christ.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 8:29-30 – AND HE WHO SENT ME IS WITH ME; HE HAS NOT LEFT ME ALONE. FOR I ALWAYS DO THE THINGS THAT ARE PLEASING TO HIM.” AS HE SPOKE THESE THINGS, MANY CAME TO BELIEVE IN HIM.”

These verses are a final word to the Jews about the power of the Son. Jesus does not stand alone. There is power behind Him. This is proven in John 12:27-28 where the Father speaks on Jesus' behalf with a loud voice from heaven. Jesus has not been left alone and in a similar way, we too will not be left alone when we are doing the Lord's work

Here is a discussion between Charles Spurgeon and David Livingstone that can allow us to develop this idea better.

Livingstone: "How can you accomplish so much in one day?"

Spurgeon: "You forget, Mr. Livingstone, there are two of us working."

Spurgeon was aware of the power of God behind him. How much more would the *Son* of God be aware of His own Father's power that stood behind Him? Oh, how comforting it is for the Christian who is held in Christ's hand! For Christ is held in the Father's everlasting arms (John 10).

Jesus does the will of the Father. This is a solemn warning to the Jews. Do not interfere with the one who is with the Lord. He who falls on the Stone will be broken. He whom the Stone falls upon will be scattered into dust.

We see that some of the Jews present believed upon Jesus. This is just a foretaste of the future exaltation of God and the ultimate redemption of His people.

APPLICATION // ...have life in His name.

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Examine the salvation that you believe yourself to have. Are you saved? Or are you self-deceived as the Jews were? Beware of the false paths to salvation that have been discussed.

How then should those of us who are saved live? (We have the power of God with us. He will vindicate us. We will not be triumphant on this earth or in this life, but when Christ returns, we shall be triumphant. We must take heart in this, for we are not of those who shrink back.)

PRAYER

Close in prayer, asking God to press this truth that was studied.

COMMENTARY / RESOURCES

Put Resources that could benefit the teacher: videos, podcasts, sermons, etc.

John MacArthur: The Simple Gospel

John MacArthur: Four Marks of a Hell Bound Man

John MacArthur: God's Role in Regeneration

John MacArthur: You Must Be Born Again

John MacArthur: Twin Truths: God's Sovereignty and Man's Responsibility

John Calvin's Commentaries: John 8

Matthew Henry's Commentaries: John 8
Charles Spurgeon's Commentary: John 8

Macarthur Study Bible

Lexical Resource: Thayer's Lexicon.