

JOHN 8:21-30
LIFE AND DEATH!

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to John chapter 8 as we continue our in-depth study in the Gospel of John.

In this chapter we have seen the Jewish religious leaders, the Scribes and the Pharisees, set Jesus up so they could expose Him as a fraud.

To do this they caught a woman in the act of adultery and that means that they must have been watching. You see, you could not accuse someone of committing this crime by seeing a couple in bed together, you had to catch them in the very act.

And the reason I say that this is a set up by these Jewish religious leaders is that they never bring the man before Jesus, only the woman.

The man was used as a pawn to not only condemn this woman, but, like I have said, to show everyone that Jesus is not who He claims to be.

They knew that Jesus had compassion towards people and thus, as this woman was before Jesus, this woman who was caught in the very act of adultery, probably naked before everyone, they believed that Jesus would reject what Moses had say was to take place. And that was that this woman and the man, who was not there before Jesus, were to be stoned to death.

Just listen to what they say to Jesus, “**Now Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do you say?**” John 8:5. And then John tells us that this was done to test Jesus.

At this point Jesus stooped down and began to write in the sand. And I believe that He was writing various sins in the sand, beginning with adultery.

You see, many of these Jewish religious leaders were involved in adultery but they did not see this as a sin in their lives, but they were very quick to point their finger at this woman and condemn her!

After writing these sins in the sand Jesus stood up and said, “**He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first.**” John 8:7.

But, instead of being convicted of their sins, knowing that none of them were sinless and thus, none of them could cast a stone at this woman, they kept on pestering Jesus on what He was going to do with this situation that was before Him.

And again, He stooped down and wrote in the sand and this time I think He began putting their names next to the various sins that were written in the sand. And, beginning with the oldest religious leader to the youngest, they all began to leave until no one was left!

No longer were there two witnesses to condemn this woman and thus, Jesus says that He is not going to condemn her either, but He tells her to sin no more!

It is then that Jesus speaks forth the second of seven *I AM* statements that John records for us as He says, “**I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.**” John 8:13.

And that lead into a heated debate with the Pharisees, a debate between the Light and the darkness!

They accused Jesus of bearing His own witness of who He was, and that was not true. He showed them back in John 5 that John the Baptist was a witness of who He was. That the works that He did bore witness of who He was as he fulfilled what the Old Testament prophets spoke regarding the Messiah. God the Father testified of who Jesus was. And the Word of God itself testified who Jesus was.

But they ignored that and continued to accuse Him that He bore witness of who He was and that was not good enough for them.

And then they accused Jesus of being born out of wedlock, that He did not even know who His father was!

And Jesus lets them have it, telling them that they don't even know who God the Father is, the One that they claimed to know but didn't know. But Jesus did because Jesus came from the Father to earth to accomplish the work the Father sent Him to do, save man from His sins!

And this was a heated debate as we see in John 8:20, "**These words Jesus spoke in the treasury, as He taught in the temple; and no one laid hands on Him, for His hour had not yet come.**"

They wanted to lay hands on Jesus, but it was not time yet on God's prophetic timeclock and thus, no one was able to touch Him, not yet!

This debate will continue on in the verses we will be looking at this morning. I have called this study – ***LIFE AND DEATH!***

These Jewish religious leaders thought they had life and the reality was that they were in darkness and headed for death!

Over the years I have done many funerals, for Christians and unbelievers. And it is when death occurs that people start to think about their own mortality!

What happens when we die?

Is there life after death?

If there is a heaven, how do we get there?

How good do I have to be to get into heaven?

And there are more questions out there because death is one of those things that we don't know how to deal with because it was not part of God's plan for man.

I guess I should say that God knew what man was going to do, sin. And after Adam sinned, the death process began, but it is not the way that Adam and Eve were created. So when death comes, it is hard for us to deal with.

That is why so many people are trying to find ways to live longer.

Eat this, don't eat that!

You need to exercise more!

You need to lose weight!

You need to keep your cholesterol levels down!

You need to stop smoking!

And you can do all those things, and there is nothing wrong with it, but in the end, guess what is going to happen! You are going to – ***DIE!***

To help us live forever, because we know these bodies will not live forever, man is trying to develop a way to download his brain into a computer system and thus, he can live forever!

Here's the thing, and I am sorry, but it is funny to me. Have you ever had your computer crash, get a blue screen? I have and there have been times when I can't do anything, it is dead!

So if my brain has been downloaded into my computer, when it crashes and dies, then I will crash and die!

Here's the thing. Everyone will live forever; you just have to choose where you will spend eternity. With the Lord or apart from Him in the Lake of Fire, outer darkness!

Make no mistake about it, people today are concerned, worried, anxious about dying. Let me share this with you and you will see what I mean. We are told,

The fear of death and dying is quite common, and most people fear death to varying degrees. To what extent that fear occurs and what it pertains to specifically varies from one person to another. While some fear is healthy because it makes us more cautious, some people may also have an unhealthy fear of dying.

According to the 2017 *“Survey of American Fears”* conducted by Chapman University, ***20.3% of Americans are “afraid” or “very afraid” of dying. It’s worth noting that this survey includes other responses that involve death which is more specific. For example, murder by a stranger (18.3%) and murder by someone you know (11.6%) are also included.***

Interestingly, almost as many Americans (20%) fear public speaking. This thought has prompted comedian Jerry Seinfeld to quip, ***“This means to the average person, if you go to a funeral, you’re better off in the casket than doing the eulogy.”*** . . .

Death remains the ultimate unknown because no one in human history has survived it to tell us what really happens after we take our last breath. It is human nature to want to understand and make sense of the world around us. The reality is that death can never be fully understood by anyone who is living.

Many people fear the idea that they will completely cease to exist after death occurs. We might typically associate this fear with atheists or others without personal spiritual or religious beliefs. The truth is that many people of faith also worry that their belief in an afterlife isn’t real after all, or that they did not earn eternal life while alive.

Similar to the fear of non-existence, this belief does not apply only to devout believers of religious or spiritual faith. Many people - regardless of their religious persuasion or lack of spiritual beliefs - fear that they will be punished for what they did, or did not do, while here on earth.

Human nature generally seeks to control the situations we encounter, but death remains something over which we have absolutely no control. This frightens many people. Some may attempt to exert some form of control over death by behaving in an extremely careful manner to avoid risks or undergoing rigorous, frequent health checks.

- bit.ly/3JwY0JT

This morning you will either be at peace with death and life after death, or you will be terrified of what is coming or even angry at me. I do pray that you hear with your ears and let it sink deep down into your heart because this truly is a message about – ***LIFE AND DEATH!***

I have broken these verses we will be looking at this morning into four main points and they are,

HEARING DEFICIT – JOHN 8:21-22

LIFE IN JESUS – JOHN 8:23-24

REFUSED TO HEAR – JOHN 8:25-27

LOOK TO THE CROSS – JOHN 8:28-30

So with that as our introduction, let's begin reading in John chapter 8, beginning in verse 21 as Jesus continues to teach these Pharisees about – ***LIFE AND DEATH!***

JOHN 8**VERSES 21-22**

Keep in mind where this is taking place. We read this in John 8:20, that Jesus was in the Temple treasury area, which was located in the court of the women. It was an open-air area, and, in this place, there were thirteen trumpet-shaped containers or boxes where the money was put in.

Each of these boxes were marked to show how the money that was deposited there would be used. For example, there was one for the Temple tax and of course other various offerings.

And in Mark 12:41-44 and Luke 21:1-4, this is the place where Jesus would observe a poor widow who was making her offering to the Lord.

And in this area, the main people He was speaking to here in John chapter 8, were the Jewish religious leaders, primarily the Pharisees as we are told in John 8:13.

And Jesus nails them here, His point is a sharp one that should have cut through to their hearts if they were listening! And thus, like I have said, I have called these verses – ***HEARING DEFICIT!***

Jesus was basically telling them that He knew where he was going, to heaven. There was no doubt about it.

But, on the other end of the spectrum He tells these Jewish religious leaders who have rejected Him, that they were not going to heaven. If they refused to follow Him, they were going to hell!

Ouch, that had to hurt.

Now it doesn't say that they are going to hell here, so why do I think their rejection of Him was going to send them to hell?

Because Jesus said to them that they “**. . . will die in their sin. . .**” John 8:21.

Notice that it is the word “**sin**” or it is singular and not plural.

What is my point.

My point is that if they reject Jesus, that sin will condemn them to spiritual death! They will not enter into heaven, that eternal life with Him but into Hell! And, of course, that would mean that they would be forever prevented from entering heaven, where the Lord was going.

Listen to what Jesus said in John 16:8-10 as He is speaking of the work of the Holy Spirit. He said, “**And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they do not believe in Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.**”

What I would like to focus on here is one of the things that the Holy Spirit does in the world today and that is, “**He will convict the world of sin.**”

Again, the word “**sin**” is singular and not plural, so what is Jesus speaking of?

Now you may be thinking, “*Hey wait a minute pastor Joe. The Bible speaks of many sins that will keep us out of heaven, so how can there only be one? That makes no sense!*”

That is a good question, and we should question these things so we can understand them.

Now we can have all kinds of ideas of what Jesus is speaking of, people can and do speculate on what He is saying, but we don't need to speculate or guess because Jesus tells us.

He said, “**of sin, because they do not believe in Me.**”

Let me be clear on this. The only sin that will keep you out of heaven is a person's rejection of Jesus Christ!

Again, what about adultery, homosexuality, stealing, cheating, coveting and the list can go on?

The only sin that will keep you out of heaven is your rejection of Jesus and these other things will determine your degree of punishment in the Lake of Fire!

That is where these Pharisees were at. They rejected Jesus and Jesus tells them that they are not going to heaven where He is returning to, they are going to Hell!

And then we see their response to what Jesus said to them. **“So the Jews said, ‘Will He kill Himself, because He says, ‘Where I go you cannot come’?”** John 8:22.

In other words, in their estimation of what Jesus was saying is that He was going to commit suicide.

Make no mistake about it, this was another insult against Jesus! We might not think too much about it, but it was a big deal in the Jewish culture.

Now how did they come up with that idea that Jesus was going to commit suicide?

Because they were slamming Jesus here, putting Him down in front of all the people so they twisted His words, which they tried to do many times, and tell the people, ***“How can you follow this man who is going to commit suicide?”***

Again, in the Jewish culture that would condemn you to the lowest levels of Hades; they were damning Jesus to Hell because of what He said.

Barclay made that point when he wrote, ***“According to Jewish thought, the depths of hell were reserved for those who took their own lives.”***

And another author wrote, *“Ironically, those who were plotting to take His life asked if He intended to commit suicide. They understood that when He said, “Where I am going, you cannot come,” Jesus was speaking of His death. The Jews abhorred suicide, and believed that those who killed themselves went to the blackest part of hell . . . Since they assumed that they were going to heaven, the Jews mockingly suggested that Jesus must be speaking of killing Himself, in which case He would go to hell . . . But He would not die by His own hand, but rather at the hands of those very men who now mocked Him (Acts 2:23). And the place to which He was referring - where He would go but they could not follow - was not hell, but heaven.”*

Think about their response and I think you will see that this was not a very civil conversation they were having with Jesus!

They basically were telling Jesus, *“Of course we are not going to follow you there. We will never follow you there. If He is going to commit suicide and end up in hell, of course we will not follow Him there because we are going to heaven!”*

I don't know about you, but as I read their response all I can think of is that they are filled with pride and they are not letting conviction draw them to Jesus, but, because of their own ideas, they are pushing themselves away from Jesus!

You see, they thought of themselves as being good, they did what was right, they followed after God and thus, since they were so good God would never send them to Hell or shut them out of heaven.

And what these Pharisees, these Jewish religious leaders were saying, many people say the same thing today!

“Why should I follow Jesus? I am a good person, not perfect but I am good. I take care of my family. I help people. I care for people. No, God would not exclude me from heaven, He would never do that because I am so good!”

That is how many people feel but have you ever been wrong about your feelings, things you have felt were right and then, in the end, you found you were completely wrong? Of course you have and that is the problem.

We can't go by our feelings because we are wrong and that is the problem for people who think that they are good. Let me show you what I mean, not what I have to say, but what God has to say. You see, He is never wrong!

In Romans 3:10 we are told, **“As it is written: ‘There is none righteous, no, not one.’”**

Paul is pretty clear on this, there are no good people. Now that may shock you and it should.

How can that be?

Because we compare our goodness, our righteousness to others and that is not the standard. The standard is God, and He is perfect, there is no darkness in Him at all. Thus, to get into heaven, you must be perfect!

Impossible!

That is absolutely true, and I will show you in a minute how we can rectify that problem, not by being a better person, not at all, because none are good, not even one!

We are told in Romans 3:23, **“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”**

Yes, all have sinned, and it is our sin that separates us from God. That is what we are told in Isaiah 59:1-2, **“Behold, the Lord’s hand is not shortened, That it cannot save; Nor His ear heavy, That it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden His face from you, So that He will not hear.”**

Sin is the problem for man as we are told in Ecclesiastes 7:20, **“For there is not a just man on earth who does good And does not sin.”**

Thus, as John tells us in I John 1:8, **“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.”**

These Jewish religious leaders, these Pharisees were deceiving themselves thinking that they were good enough for heaven and many do the same today!

What is the solution?

Come to the Light of the World, Jesus Christ. Paul put it like this in II Corinthians 5:21, **“For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”**

Do you see what Jesus has done for us?

He took our sins, paid the penalty for our sins in full and in exchange He gave to us His righteousness!

What does that mean?

It means, for those who have come to Christ, that when God the Father looks at you, when He looks at me, He sees us as perfect, without sin, because the blood of Jesus Christ has cleansed us from *ALL* sin!

That is in a positional sense. In a practical sense we still sin, the flesh wars against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh and whatever you feed the most will be manifested in your life.

But we are saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ and not by our own works, our own efforts, our own goodness, but by the blood of Jesus!

Listen to how straightforward, how clearly and faithfully Jesus answers them.

They had a – ***HEARING DEFICIT!***

But Jesus is going to show them that – ***THERE IS LIFE IN JESUS!***

VERSES 23-24

These Jewish religious leaders thought they were going to heaven and Jesus to Hell, according to their beliefs!

But Jesus corrects them on this one. You see, because of their unbelief, because of their sins that have separated them from God, they will spend an eternity apart from God because they have rejected the One who can cleanse them from their sins!

Just because they were religious leaders does not mean that they were in the light, that they knew God. They were blinded to the things of God like many are today.

Let me show you what I mean. Several weeks back I posted a Bible verse on Facebook, which I do every day and this one was from Matthew 7:15 and it said, “**Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.**”

Pretty straight forward and I usually don’t post anything else. But I had to respond to what someone posted.

They wrote, *“Pre Pentecost, who needs a prophet when the greatest prophet lives within. God in Christ that, which is perfect is here.”*

And I agree, the office of prophet has passed off the scene now, but this word can also speak of those who are speaking forth the Word of God.

And this is what I wrote back, *“. . . we still need to be aware of false teachers. A prophet not only spoke of future events but most of the time they proclaimed the words of God. That is a big problem in the church today, no discernment. We need to be aware as deception is a big part of the last days.”*

Pretty easy to understand and the response was interesting. This person wrote back, *“Sometimes we accuse falsely, God is judge . . . love one another, pray for all men, share the gospel to every man.”*

And that is true, most of it. We do need to love each other. But we are also to judge what is being spoken. The Berean’s checked Paul out to see if what he was teaching was true or not. (Acts 17:11)

Most of the New Testament letters were dealing with false teaching and even exposing false teachers.

And Jesus said in Matthew 7:15-16, **“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles?”**

The only way you can judge is by the fruit, what is produced in their lives, and you have to check what is being spoken with the Word of God. I pray that you do that with me. I am not perfect; I am just like you. And if they checked Paul out to see if what he taught was in the Scriptures, then you need to do your homework and check me out!

And here in John, Jesus is telling them that they have no idea what they are talking about because they are blind to the things of God, they are walking in darkness. Jesus is from above and they are not and thus, He knows all things!

Remember that the Pharisees were telling Jesus that He was going to Hell because He was talking about committing suicide, but He wasn't, but that is what they thought! And Jesus wants them to see the light because, again, they were in darkness!

And listen again to what Jesus told them, "**Therefore I say to you that you will die in your sins, for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.**" John 8:24.

First of all, let me deal with this word "**sins.**" You see, what is interesting here is that in verse 21 the word "**sin**" is singular and now, here in verse 24 Jesus speaks of "**sins**" plural.

Why is that?

Let me explain it like this. First of all, you are condemned for rejecting Jesus, that is the sin that condemns you.

And, like I have said, the judgment that you will face in Hell is according to the sins you committed in this life.

You see, your sins separated you from God and your sin of rejecting the atoning work of the Savior, of Jesus condemns you to Hell!

It is as Bruce wrote, "***The plural 'sins' is used in verse 24, as against the singular 'sin' in verse 21; if the singular expresses the root sin of unbelief, the plural expresses those particular attitudes, words and actions which make up its fruit.***"

And for those who say that Jesus never claimed to be Almighty God, I am sorry, but you need to open your eyes, like these Pharisees needed to do.

Jesus speaks of this often in the Gospel of John.

And this is where the translators messed up. You see, here in John 8:24 it should be translated, **“Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I AM, you will die in your sins.”**

You see, the **“He”** was added for clarity by the translators, but it actually takes away from what is being said.

Jesus is once again speaking of His deity, that He is the great *I AM*, or the *EGO EIMI!* He is the voice from the burning bush from Exodus chapter 3!

And thus, for these Pharisees and for people today as well, if they want to be saved from their sins, they must believe in Jesus and that He is the Son of God, He is Almighty God who came down from heaven and has gone back up into heaven after the work that He came to do was completed.

And Jesus is very clear on this, if you don't, then you will die in your sins!

This is a salvation issue. You see, every one of us were born into this world, I think we can all agree on that. And we were born ***“in Adam.”*** That is our physical birth.

And here is the problem, as Paul tells us, **“For as in Adam all die . . .”** I Corinthians 15:22.

Because we were born in Adam, we have the sin nature passed down to us. You can read of this in Genesis chapter 5 where we get the genealogy from Adam onward. And we are told that Adam was **“made . . . in the likeness of God.”** Genesis 5:1.

In other words, no sin, Adam was perfect when he was created.

And then he sinned, and we see the sin nature in Adam and that sin nature was passed down to future generations as we are told of his descendants, that **“he begot a son in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth.”** Genesis 5:3.

No longer was man created in the image of God but now in the image of Adam with that sin nature.

Thus, when we are born into this world, physical birth, we are born spiritually dead in our trespasses and sins! We are born – ***IN ADAM!*** Every one of us because none are good, none are righteous, there is no one without sin!

That is the problem!

What is the solution?

We need to be – ***BORN AGAIN!***

Listen to what all of I Corinthians 15:22 says, “**For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.**”

Paul is speaking of the new birth we have in Christ. That once we repent of our sins, ask Jesus to be Lord and Savior of our lives, understanding that He is Almighty God, we are born again.

Think of it like this. Born once you will die twice. You are born into this world in Adam, in sin and you will die a physical death and you have died spiritually speaking and you will end up in the Lake of Fire eternally separated from God.

But if you are born twice, you will only die once. Yes, you are born into this world in Adam, in sin. But when you come to Christ you are born again, and you are alive in Christ and your spirit is now in tune with the Spirit of God!

There is a big difference as John tells us in I John 5:19, “**We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one.**”

Listen to how The Living Bible puts this verse, “**We know that we are children of God and that all the rest of the world around us is under Satan’s power and control.**”

You see, apart from Christ a person belongs to Satan's kingdom and is under his control. That is why we see people do all kinds of evil things, they are of this world, under the control of Satan and they need to come to Christ and be born again!

Remember what we were told in John 3:3, "**Jesus answered and said to him, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.'**"

Did you see that? Unless you are born again, you will not see the Kingdom of God, you will not spend eternity with Him but apart from Him!

So where do you belong? In Adam or in Christ? That is a choice you must make.

As you come to Christ, listen to what He has done for you. Paul wrote this in Ephesians 2:1-5, "**And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved).**"

We were spiritually dead and in Christ, we are now alive! We have been born again!

And what did He rescue us from?

Paul tells us in Colossians 1:13-14, and this is from The Living Bible. We are told, "**For he has rescued us out of the darkness and gloom of Satan's kingdom and brought us into the Kingdom of his dear Son, who bought our freedom with his blood and forgave us all our sins.**"

Praise God for what He has done for us. There is – *LIFE IN JESUS!*

The problem, as we will see, is that they – ***REFUSED TO HEAR!***

VERSES 25-27

The big question here is how did they ask this question, “**Who are You?**”

If this is a sincere question that they are asking, that is wonderful, but I don’t think this was a sincere question when you listen to all they said about Jesus and the mocking of Him.

I think this was a sarcastic question and they were not really looking for an answer. How can I be so sure?

Because Jesus told them over and over and over again who He was, and they rejected it. They saw many of the miracles that He had done, and they refused to believe that these were done in the name of God, but these were just demonic healings they felt!

They wanted to trap Jesus not find out who He really was!

Haven’t you dealt with people that really are not interested in what you have to say about Jesus but just try to poke fun at you and God? I have. And they may even say foolish things like, ***“If God can do anything, can He make a rock that is so big that He can’t lift it?”***

Foolishness. It would be like asking a person, ***“Have you stopped beating your wife?”***

If you answer ***“Yes”*** that means that you were beating your wife.

If you answer ***“No”*** that means you are still beating your wife.

You see, foolish question that can’t be answered with just a ***“Yes”*** or ***“No”***.

And yes, there are some things that God can’t do. It doesn’t take away that fact that He is all powerful, but it fits in with His nature. Listen to a few of them.

God can’t ignore sin!

God cannot lie. God absolutely cannot tell a lie.

God cannot change.

God cannot deny Himself.

God cannot fail.

God cannot break a promise.

God's intent and power cannot be stopped.

God's Word cannot be broken.

God cannot stop loving you.

Those are not bad things. In fact, we count on them, and we can count on them because what God has said, He will do!

And think about this, isn't it wonderful to know that God cannot stop loving us? Of course it is and may we never lose sight of that fact!

For these Pharisees, they shut their ears to what Jesus was saying! He told them over and over again who He was, but they refused to listen!

In fact, the words Jesus spoke came from the Father so if they can't accept what Jesus is saying then they are also rejecting the Words of the Father.

In John 8:27, as Jesus is speaking of judging them, listen to what Clarke wrote, ***“I could speedily expose all your iniquities-your pride and ambition, your hypocrisy and irreligion, your hatred to the light, and your malice against the truth, together with the present obstinate unbelief of your hearts, and show that these are the reasons why I say you will die in your sins.”***

That is pretty straightforward and yet, they just refused to listen.

Warren Wiersbe summed it up like this as he wrote, *“It seems incredible that these religious ‘experts’ should ask, ‘Who are You?’ He had given them every evidence that He is the Son of God, yet they had deliberately rejected the evidence. Our Lord’s reply may be expressed, ‘I am exactly what I said!’ In other words, ‘Why should I teach you new things, or give you new proof, when you have not honestly considered the witness I have already given?’”*

Jesus made it clear that from the beginning of His ministry He has been telling them who He was, and they have ignored it. That is why I said that this was not an honest question. It was a put down, it was sarcastic. *“Who do you think you are?”* you might say.

Remember what Jesus said in John 5:39-40 to these religious leaders, **“You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life.”**

They were searching the Scriptures to find eternal life but they just were not willing to see who Jesus was, Almighty God who came to save them from their sins!

It is so sad when people hear the truth, know the truth and yet reject the truth.

Let me show you what I mean. We are told,

Several years ago Dr. Gordon A. Alles, a noted chemist and the man who pioneered the development of insulin for the treatment of diabetes, died of that very disease.

His friends who were closest to him came to one of two conclusions.

Either he did not know he had the disease, or he purposely neglected to use the remedy.

What irony – the man who knew more about the cure for diabetes than anyone else in the whole world died of the disease.

I do not know what the truth of the matter was, but if Alles knew his condition, the situation was even more tragic.

In the same way a person can know that Christ is the *I AM*, he can give all of his mind to that, but unless there comes a belief that involves receiving the cure, he will die in his sins.

The Jews lacked that belief.

- R. Kent Hughes, John, p. 240

And sadly, people continue to do that today, they reject the cure for their sins, they reject Jesus!

And John tells us that “**They did not understand that He spoke to them of the Father.**” They again were not listening, paying attention to what Jesus was saying. They closed their ears, hardened their hearts and in the end, they were going to die in their sins all because they – ***REFUSED TO HEAR!***

And Jesus is going to continue to teach them and show them and this last point in these verses is – ***LOOK TO THE CROSS!***

VERSES 28-30

Notice what Jesus says here, “**When YOU lift up the Son of Man.**” He is speaking of the Jewish religious leaders who will bring Jesus before Pilate to put Him to death.

Yes, they were accountable for their actions, but please understand that everyone of us has put Jesus on the cross. It was our sin that put Him there. So we can’t blame the Jews or the Romans or anyone else, because we are just as guilty.

And, as we can clearly see, Jesus is speaking of the cross and that when He is lifted up many will be drawn to Him.

It is as Jesus in John 3:14-15, **“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.”**

You see, as Jesus is lifted up, they will see His perfect obedience to the Father.

I think that is our hearts desire, to **“always do those things that please Him.”**

But we do come up short. Lord, help us to do those things that please you!

Again, for those that say Jesus never claimed to be God, look again at what we see here in John 8:28.

Here in verse 28 the word **“He”** was added for clarity, but it takes away from what Jesus is saying, that He is Almighty God.

It should read, **“then you will know that I AM.”**

That is what Jesus has been speaking to them about, that He is Almighty God.

So, the cross is at the center for without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin, and it is our sins that separate us from God.

Now, in saying that, let me share this with you because it will put things into perspective for us.

We are told,

I have heard that the geographical center of the city of London is Charing Cross. You can find your way anywhere in London if you are at Charing Cross.

The story is told of a little boy who was lost.

A bobby came along and wiped away his tears.

When he had gotten him settled, he said, “*Can I take you home, son?*”

The boy replied, “*Oh, no, sir, take me to the cross, and I’ll find my way home.*”

When we orient ourselves to the cross, we begin to see the *I AM*, the eternity and magnificence of God.

By virtue of that undertaking, we enter into this kingdom above by faith.

- R. Kent Hughes, John, p. 241

Exactly! When you see what God has done for us, when you see His death and resurrection, it shows us who Jesus is – *ALMIGHTY GOD!*

Think of the religious leaders who have come and gone and when I say that they have gone, that is all you can say about them. They are gone! They did not come back.

But Jesus died on the cross of Calvary, and He rose on the third day in fulfillment of the Scriptures and thus, He is not just another great religious teacher, He is - *ALMIGHTY GOD!*

Remember what Paul wrote in I Corinthians 15:1-4, and this is from The Amplified Bible, “**AND NOW let me remind you [since it seems to have escaped you], brethren, of the Gospel (the glad tidings of salvation) which I proclaimed to you, which you welcomed and accepted and upon which your faith rests, And by which you are saved, if you hold fast and keep firmly what I preached to you, unless you believed at first without effect and all for nothing. For I passed on to you first of all what I also had received, that Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed One) died for our sins in accordance with [what] the Scriptures [foretold], [Isa 53:5-12.] That He was buried, that He arose on the third day as the Scriptures foretold, [Ps 16:9,10.]**”

That is the Gospel message and that is what we are to present to people, let them see Jesus high and lifted up so that they may come to that saving faith!

Now, when the Pharisees heard Jesus speak, they became more opposed to Him. And they will continue to oppose Him until they can get a death sentence upon Him. But keep in mind that this is all in fulfillment of what the prophets spoke of. Not only that, but Jesus was not just dying for the non-religious Jewish people, He was dying for all people, even these Jewish religious leaders, these Pharisees.

And some of the Pharisees believed but they are kind of closet Christians you might say, they don't want to lose their positions and some of these Pharisees are keeping silent about their faith in Christ. Nicodemus is a good example of this. He sought Jesus by night, and I believe after hearing what Jesus was saying, he came to the faith.

But keep in mind that there were many other Jewish people there listening to Jesus speak in the Court of the Women. And "**many**" who heard the same words "**believed in Him.**" They believed in spite of the apparent opposition of the religious leaders.

Why were the people drawn to Jesus?

Because the words of Jesus matched His life, while the lifestyle of the Pharisees didn't.

The people saw the relationship Jesus had with the Father and they also saw how the Pharisees claimed this relationship but didn't have one.

Ray Stedman gives us this insight as he wrote,

What made the difference? The cross.

What does Jesus mean, "When you have lifted up the Son of man"?

When you see Jesus on the cross then you begin to understand the facts about life. That is what he is saying. When he is lifted up on the cross he gives himself for the sins of the world.

When that occurs in history or to the eyes of faith, then you will begin to see Jesus for who he is: the Lord of Glory, the Liberator of man, the Redeemer from our sins, the Cleanser from our shame, the One who can wash away all our stain and forgive us. And you will see the power of his Word.

You will see that he speaks with authority as the Father taught him.

Further, you will see the sinless beauty of the Son of God who is the delight of the Father's heart, the Model Man, man as God intended man to be. All that becomes visible when you think of the cross of Jesus.

It is very good for us often to remember the story of the cross. It is good to remember all the detail that is given in the Gospels about how in the upper room he was "exceeding sorrowful unto death"; the shadows of Gethsemane; the deep darkness of his loneliness; his prayers; his disappointment with his disciples; the bloody sweat that fell from his brow; the traitor's kiss; the binding; the blow in the face; the scourging, the smiting, the spitting, the buffeting, the mocking; the crown of thorns; the sorrowful way through the city streets; the burden of the cross; the exhaustion that he endured; the collapse; the stripping; the impaling upon the cross; the nails through his hands; the jeers of his foes; the flight of his friends; the hours on the cross; the darkness; the terrible cry that came from his lips, "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?"; the thirst; and the triumphant cry at the end, "It is finished."

When you remember that, Jesus declares, then you will see the awful reality of human depravity, the terrible evil that lurks in every single human heart without exception that makes it necessary for us to lay hold of the one way out, which is the Lord Jesus himself.

There you will see the love of God spelled out for us, a God who could give his only Son, “who spared not his only Son, but gave himself up for us, how much will he also freely give us all other things,” (Romans 8:32).

That is why the cross is such an important thing in Christian faith, and why we make it the symbol of our faith - because it is there you begin to see life the way it really is.

- bit.ly/3LkRDuH

Now as exciting as it is to see that some believed, the Jewish religious leaders are going to come after Jesus again. And belief is important, but that belief then needs to be seen in your life or they are empty words of faith.

I will close with this. We are told,

A certain pastor observed a little girl standing outside the preschool Sunday school classroom between Sunday school and worship, waiting for her parents to come and pick her up for “big church.”

The pastor noticed that she clutched a big storybook under her arm with the title “Jonah and the Whale.”

Feeling mischievous, he knelt beside the girl and asked, “What’s that you have in your hand?”

“This is my storybook about Jonah and the whale,” she answered.

“Tell me something,” he continued, “do you believe that story about Jonah and the whale?”

The girl said, “Why, of course I believe it!”

The pastor inquired further, “You really believe a man can be swallowed up by a big whale, stay inside him all that time, and come out okay?”

She declared, “Yes! This story is in the Bible, and we talked about it in Sunday school today.”

Then the pastor asked, “Can you prove to me this story is true?”

She thought for a moment and then said, “Well, when I get to heaven, I’ll ask Jonah.”

Finally the pastor asked, “What if Jonah’s not in heaven?”

The girl put her hands on her hips and sternly declared, “Then YOU can ask him!”

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That is faith as this little girl was not going to be swayed by this pastor. May we stand strong in our faith and never forget who Jesus is – *ALMIGHTY GOD!*

Jesus has warned us, “**Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins, for if you do not believe that I am, you will die in your sins.**” John 8:24.

It is a matter of – *LIFE AND DEATH!*