

Where I Go You Cannot Come

John 7:25-36

BI: Seek the Lord while He may be found. Call upon Him while He is near. Now is the time. Today is the day of salvation.

Read John 7:14-14

Introduction:

I suspect if I were setting out to write a story about a great man whom I want others to admire and believe in I would write much about his rise to fame, his great accomplishments, and His depth of wisdom and reveal very little about the negative responses he received from his critics. But this is not how the Apostle John portrays Jesus. Much of this gospel is about the fierce opposition Jesus faced throughout His ministry.

Granted, the first few chapters did cast Jesus in a more positive light. In chapters 1-4 we find Him presented in Galilee, Judea, Samaria, and then back in Galilee again with only minimal opposition. There we see how Jesus gathers His disciples, turns water into wine, cleanses the temple, and has a significant gospel conversation with a prominent Pharisee named Nicodemus. Then, Jesus receives the endorsement of Israel's only recognized prophet, John the Baptist, the woman at the well trusts in Him followed by her entire town in chapter four followed by healing of a nobleman's.

Following this, however, Jesus heals a man at the pool of Bethesda on the Sabbath, and this is where the opposition really begins. In chapter 5 there is opposition to Him at an unnamed feast. In chapter 6 it ramps us after He performs the great miracle of feeding the 5,000. Then there is even stronger push back at the time of the Passover. Now in chapter 7 the opposition is really heating up at the feast of tabernacles where we learn that the Jews are actually planning to kill Him.

If fact, if you trace it out you find that many of His disciples reject him at this time (6:66). He is rejected by His family (7:5). He is rejected by the leaders of Israel (7:19). And He is rejected by many of the common people (7:7, 20). In the end all of them will rise up together and demand His blood. They will insist that Rome execute Him as a criminal insurrectionist who turns the people against Caesar.

So far this is not a happy story. This is a story of intense conflict and turmoil. And why did Jesus face such strong opposition? Not so much because of what Jesus did, but because of what He said. Specifically, they were offended by what He said about them. He repeatedly told them that they didn't know God. And His proof that they didn't know God was that they were rejecting Him. His oft-repeated message was "If you reject me you reject God."

- A. John 5:23 "Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him."
- B. John 5:42–43: "I know that you do not have the love of God within you. I have come in my Father's name, and you do not receive me."
- C. John 6:45 "Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me."
- D. John 8:19: "You know neither me nor my Father. If you knew me, you would know my Father also."
- E. John 8:42: "If God were your Father, you would love Me."

Make no mistake, beloved. Jesus was saying, "You cannot know God if you don't believe and receive Me. Statements like this infuriated many (if not the majority) of those who heard him. Let's see if we can observe this in the text.

I. Confusion about Jesus Among the People:

1. Read 7:25-27

2. The people were confused. They were sure that the Jewish leaders were against Jesus and practically everyone was aware of the fact that they had a price on His head, but here He is in the Temple courts standing out in the open in a crowd of people with no bodyguards or anything. He's just teaching as if there were not threat? The Sanhedrin and the Temple police obviously know He is here, but they aren't doing anything about it. Do you suppose they have changed their minds about Jesus? Have they concluded that He really is the Christ?

3. But there were others who were less optimistic (27). They said, "We know where this man is from, but when Christ comes no one will know." Perhaps they were thinking of the passage from the OT's final prophet, Malachi through whom God said,

Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple; and the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, He is coming," says the LORD of hosts.

4. But notice how Jesus (almost sarcastically) responds . Verse 28-29 Jesus is saying almost sarcastically, "You only think you know where I come from. You think of me as coming from the despised city of Nazareth, but in reality I have come down from the Father in heaven. He has sent me, (this is the really inflammatory part) "whom you do not know. I know Him because I am from Him and He sent me."

5. You know why it's difficult to engage in evangelism in Texas (and in the South generally)? It's not because people reject the notion of there being a God but because everyone thinks they already know God. Everybody's a Christian in Texas, right! You can go to a good old fashion Texas rodeo down at the Stock Yards and before the competition begins you will hear one of the most evangelical, God acknowledging prayers (even evoking Jesus' name), and then, after the Amen, they'll ask everyone to give a big round of applause to the Cores Girls who have come as the official cheerleaders of the event.

Everyone thinks they're a Christian, and nobody likes to be challenged with the possibility that they are self-deceived! The People in Jerusalem believed very strongly that they knew God and belonged to God... and they were mistaken. They were self-deceived.

6. John 8:19 makes this transparently: "So they were saying to Him, "Where is Your Father?" Jesus answered, "You know neither Me nor My Father; if you knew Me, you would know My Father also."

7. If there is any doubt that the Jews didn't like hearing someone question their relationship with God, just read the next verse (30).

7. In all fairness it must be noted that not everyone was hostile (31). God always has His remnant. But for the most part, there was great confusion among the people about who Jesus was. That confusion, however, wasn't anything compared to the Pharisees outright rejection. We've seen confusion about Jesus among the people; and now...

II. Rejection of Jesus Among the Leaders:

1. By this time the Pharisees and chief had had enough. In the past concern for the crowds kept them from arresting Jesus but now it was just too much. It was as if Jesus was just daring them to come and get Him. So they sent the Temple police to go and arrest Him (Read 32).

2. We don't find out till later what happen when the police arrived to arrest Him, but just fast-forward to v. 45-46 and we'll see (Read 45-46).

3. After this Jesus says something that is really the ground and substance of this message (read 33-34).

4. What did He mean? Well, there are two parts to this message. First, He was telling them that He would be going away soon. Second, He was revealing that they could not come where He was going.

5. What did Jesus mean when He said, “For a little while longer I am with you...?” I am persuaded that Jesus knew all too well that He was entering His last six months on earth. The Passover was only half a year away and then he would be arrested, tried, convicted, and executed. Then, after atonement was made, the ransom paid for sinners on the cross, Jesus would return to His heavenly home: “Then I will go to Him who sent me” He said (33).

6. Scholars debate over what Jesus meant here, but I think Jesus was warning them of the sobering reality that they only had a little more time to consider His claims, His miracles, and His miraculous fulfillment of Messianic prophesy. After that, He would be gone. Then, “You will seek Me, and will not find Me; and where I am you cannot come.”

7. Notice how the Jews responded (Read 35).

8. “The dispersion” (also called the Diaspora) is a reference to the Jews whose families had moved outside of Israel after Nebuchadnezzar had taken Judah into captivity in Babylon for 70 years. Later when the king of Persia allowed the Jews to return to their homeland many did, but there were also many who remained in the lands to which they had fled. In Jesus’ day, thanks to Alexander the Great, these were all Greek speaking nations.

9. The Pharisees clearly had no idea about what Jesus was telling them. They thought maybe He was planning to run for His life across the boarder where He would escape the threat of living in Israel.

10. In reality, however, they didn’t really know what He meant. So they ask (36)...

11. The answer to the first question, “Where will He go” is simple. “I am going to Him who sent me.” It was impossible for Jesus to be more clear as to what He meant by this. He said it over and over again.

- A. John 5:36-37 “But the testimony which I have is greater than the testimony of John; for the works which the Father has given Me to accomplish—the very works that I do—testify about Me, that the Father has sent Me. And the Father who sent Me, He has testified of Me..”
- B. John 6:57 “As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he also will live because of Me.
- C. John 8:16 “But even if I do judge, My judgment is true; for I am not alone in it, but I and the Father who sent Me.
- D. John 8:18 “I am He who testifies about Myself, and the Father who sent Me testifies about Me.”
- E. John 8:42 “Jesus said to them, “If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and have come from God, for I have not even come on My own initiative, but He sent Me.”
- F. John 13:3 “Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come forth from God and was going back to God,
- G. John 14:28 “You heard that I said to you, ‘I go away, and I will come to you.’ If you loved Me, you would have rejoiced because I go to the Father, for the Father is greater than I.

12. Again and again Jesus said that He had come from the Father and was returning to the Father who is none other than God Himself. So, to the first of the Pharisees questions, “Where does this man intend to go?”, Jesus answers, “I am going back to God the Father. He is the One who sent me here and I am returning to Him.”

13. To the second question, What does He mean by, “where I go you cannot come”?, I think Jesus’ answer is even more sobering. I am persuaded that Jesus is saying, “You cannot come where I am going because when you die you are NOT going to God.”

14. Now I realize that what I am preaching today is offensive to the post-modern ear. What we see in this text is Jesus making exclusive,

universal truth claims declaring that He is the only way to heaven. But it's even worse than that, because He is also unequivocal about that fact that all other belief-systems are erroneous; that is, they are wrong.

15. Let's be clear on this fact, Jesus was not friendly to the postmodern view of truth wherein everyone is free to determine what is true for themselves. But here is what the NT teaches regarding what is really true about salvation.

- John 14:6 Jesus says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father but by Me."
- Acts 4:12 the apostle Peter proclaimed to a hostile audience, "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."
- John 3:36, the apostle John writes, "He who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on Him."
- Paul teaches that the only hope of salvation is Jesus Christ when, writing to Timothy, he said, "For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus (1 Tim. 2:5).
- 1 John 5:11-12, "And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life."

16. Beloved, the claims of the gospel are not fluid and moldable to our preferences and feelings. There is only one way to God and that is through the Person of Jesus Christ. To reject Jesus is to reject God no matter how religious you may be. That's why Jesus said to the religious leaders of His day, "Where I am [going] you cannot come."

17. Of course, the Pharisees hated this kind of talk even more than the leaders of our own pluralistic society. And in the end they would kill Him. The irony is that by killing Him they would secure both the salvation of all who would believe and they would secure their own eternal damnation.

18. If there is any question that Jesus is saying this we need only look at 8:21.

19. The sobering reality is that one day you too will die. By then your eternal destination will be secure one way or another. You will either die in your sins leading to eternal judgment in Hell where the worm never dies and the fire is never quenched, or you will be gladly welcomed into the home of God the Father where there is joy unspeakable and eternal. The difference, my friend, is whether or not you have believed upon and received Jesus Christ as your only hope of salvation. This is the promise of the gospel. And this is the only means by which sinners can be reconciled to God.

BI: Seek the Lord while He may be found. Call upon Him while He is near. Now is the time. Today is the day of salvation.

As MacArthur says, “Hell is not where Christ is forgotten. It is where He is unavailable.”

Outline:

- I. The People’s Confusion:
- II. The Leader’s Rejection
- III. The Savior’s Exclusion

Jn. 8:21 is an interpretive clue. Jesus says, “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.”

Matthew 25: 10 virgins and other passages where the door is shut and its too late. No one can come in.

Seek the Lord while He may be found.

Key Scriptures:

Luke 18:9-14 Tax Collector and the Pharisee.

Phil. 3:2-9 Paul's righteousness

Pro. 16:2 "All the ways of men are clean in their own sight, but the Lord weighs the motives."

Rev. 3:17-18 Because you say, "I am rich..."

v. 20

- "You have a demon" here means, "You have lost your senses." They thought of mental illness in terms of demon possession.

v. 21

- The "one deed" Jesus did was healing the paralytic at the Pool of Bethesda. It caused all who heard of it to marvel.

v. 22

- The Jews always circumcised their new-born boy's 8 days after they were born even if the 8th day was a Sabbath.

v. 23

- The Jews permitted an act/work on the Sabbath that resulted in the health and well-being of the child being circumcised. They should not have objected to His healing a whole man. They

circumcised regularly on the Sabbath, but Jesus had only healed this man one time. They “worked” or a child that was not ill, but Jesus healed a man who had been ill for 38 years.

Christ’s Righteousness:

(Rom. 5:12-21) Because of this representative union between Christ and His people, all of our responsibilities before God rest upon Him, and all of His merit accrues to us. Jesus, as our representative, assumed all the obligations in which Adam failed, and fulfilled them on our behalf. So, just as Adam’s sin was as truly our sin as if we had committed it, so Christ’s perfect obedience to God’s law and His death to pay the penalty of a broken law are just as much our obedience and death as if we had perfectly obeyed God’s law and died on the cross. (Jerry Bridges, *The Discipline of Grace*, p. 67 cf. 22)

Bridges:

“Your worst days are never so bad that you are beyond the reach of God’s grace. And your best days are never so good that you are beyond the need for God’s grace” (Jerry Bridges, *The Discipline of Grace*. P. 18).

Bridges:

“God never intended that we relate to Him directly. Our own performance is never good enough to be acceptable to Him. The only way we can relate to God is through the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ” (Jerry Bridges, *The Discipline of Grace*, p. 22).

Bridges (Luke 18)

“Jesus told this parable to those who were confident of their own righteousness, that is, to those who felt good about their

own performance. As long as we compare ourselves with society around us and with other believers who are not as committed as we are, we also are apt to become confident of our own righteousness - not a righteousness unto salvation, but at least a righteousness that will make God pleased with our performance. ***The sin of the Pharisee, then, can become the sin of the most orthodox and committed Christian***

Lloyd Jones:

“Discipline in the Christian life is a good and essential thing. But if your main object and intent is to conform to the discipline that you have set for yourself it may very well be the greatest danger to your soul. Fasting and prayer are good things; but if you fast twice a week or pray at a particular hour every day merely in order to carry out your discipline, then you may have missed the whole object of fasting and praying. There is no point in either of them, or in observing Lent, or in anything else that is meant to be an aid to the spiritual life, unless they bring us into a deeper relationship to God. I may stop smoking, I may stop drinking or gambling during these six weeks or at any other period. But if during that time my poverty of spirit is not greater, my sense of weakness is not deepened, my hunger and thirst after God and righteousness is not greatly increased, then I might just as well not have done it at all. Indeed I would say it would be very much better for me if I had not done it. All this is the fatal danger of making these things ends in themselves... These things are meant to be aids to help us, and illustrations of the word. God forbid that we should turn them into a religion. 'The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.'” (Martin Lloyd-jones, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*, p. 220).

MacArthur:

“Faith, then, is seeking and finding God in Christ, desiring Him and ultimately being fulfilled with Him. Another way of saying

it is that faith is wholly leaning on Christ - for redemption, for righteousness, for counsel, for fellowship, for sustenance, for direction, for succor, for His lordship, and for all in life that can truly satisfy,” (John MacArthur, *Faith Works*, p. 48).

John Bunyan

“In his spiritual autobiography, John Bunyan wrote: “But one day, as I was passing in the field, and that too with some dashes on my conscience, fearing lest yet all was not right, suddenly this sentence fell upon my soul, ‘Thy righteousness is in heaven:’ and methought withal, I saw, with the eyes of my soul, Jesus Christ at God’s right hand; there, I say, is my righteousness; so that wherever I was, or whatever I was adoring, God could not say of me, ‘He wants [that is, lacks] my righteousness,’ for that was just before Him. I also saw moreover, that it was not my good frame of heart that made my righteousness better, nor yet my bad frame that made my righteousness worse; for my righteousness was Jesus Christ himself, the same yesterday, and today and forever”, (Phillips, Ryken & Dever, *The Church One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic*, p. 82-83)

Horace Mann:

Horace Mann believed the public schools would get people in touch with their basic goodness: “Let the Common School be expanded to its capabilities, let it be worked with the efficiency of which it is susceptible, and nine-tenths of the crimes in the penal code would become obsolete; the long catalogue of human ills would be abridged; men would walk more safely by day; every pillow would be more inviolable by night; property, life and character held by a stronger tenure; all rational hopes respecting the future brightened” (Jeff Baldwin, *The Deadliest Monster*, p. 198).

John Piper:

“Self-righteousness is your own personal defense attorney” (John Piper, *Seeing and Savoring Jesus Christ*, p. 21).

Practical/Theological Issues:

Quotations:

Spurgeon:

“Tried brother, Jesus knows all about your case and how he is going to bring you through. Do not think that you can inform him as to anything. “Your heavenly Father knows what you have need of before you ask him.” Prayer is not meant for the Lord’s information. The question is not put to you that you may instruct him, but that he may instruct you. He made the heavens and the earth without you. With whom took he counsel? Who instructed Him? And He will bring you through this present trial of yours without needing to add our poor wisdom to his infinite knowledge. He knows!”

Notes

Jesus began this miracle by putting Phillip to the test.

To show Philip his inability

To empty Philips hands.

To bring him to the end of Himself.

To make him feel his utter dependence upon the Lord

To reveal his spiritual poverty

Jesus initiated the problem.

He could have just taught them and sent them away

The thought of feeding them was, to be sure, an act of compassion desiring to meet the multitude's need.

Their's was not an essential need.

It was not like in the desert wilderness where the children of Israel were really in danger of starving. These people were here by choice. They counted the cost (presumably) and came out to Jesus during the dinner hour. They were no doubt fully aware that they may have to miss a meal to sit under his teaching. (This reminds me of the Shepherd's conference when they brought in In-N-Out for lunch. Not a need, but a nice blessing).

Some of the people even brought their own provisions; hence, we see at least one boy who had planned ahead and brought a meal (original boy scout – Be Prepared).

Jesus did not create something new. He used what was already available (loaves & fish).

Bread is a source of Life:

Do not trust in Bread, but in the One who gives the bread with a word.

Jesus was born in Bethlehem which means "House of Bread."

The danger in this life is that we will find life in bread. That is, we will find life in whatever satisfies our bodily appetites or fulfills our temporal longings.

Isaiah 55:1–3

“Ho! Every one who thirsts, come to the waters; And you who have no money come, buy and eat. Come, buy wine and milk Without money and without cost. ² **“Why do you spend money for what is not bread, And your wages for what does not satisfy?** Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, And delight yourself in abundance. ³ “Incline your ear and come to Me. Listen, that you may live; And I will make an everlasting covenant with you, *According to* the faithful mercies shown to David.