

# G R A C E

Reformed Baptist Church

Soli    ♦    Deo    ♦    Gloria

## THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

### Sermon Notes

#### *The Origin of Jesus' Authority*

John 8:21-30

September 4, 2005

### INTRODUCTION

- Throughout the remainder of Chapter 8 Jesus is going to reveal the origin of His authority, as well as the nature of His identity. However, in Verses 21-39, Jesus lays the foundation for the revelation of Himself [the reaction of the Jews following this revelation is nothing short of fascinating].
- Further, the reader gets a sense, here, of the significance of the need for and relationship between regeneration [by the work of the Holy Spirit] and justification by faith.

### Verse 21

- Jesus says, “I go away, and you will seek Me...where I am going, you cannot come”
  - This is a reiteration of John 7:36.
  - Jesus’ words, “I go away...” are a clear reference to His crucifixion
  - Then, He states, “...you will seek Me...”
    1. The day will soon come when some will look for the Messiah and die in their sin. Note: This is NOT a contradiction of Romans 3:11 [“There is none who seeks for God”], for they will not look for the true Messiah, the Son of Man – Jesus Christ; rather, they will look for THEIR IDEA of the Messiah – a physical deliverer, Jewish king. This idea is clearly [and tragically] seen in the modern-day Jewish Passover meal. Jews today set a place at the Passover table for Elijah, hoping that he will return at Passover. This is because they believe Elijah will physically return to prepare the way for the Messiah [Jesus said that John the Baptist was the prophesied Elijah].
      - John Gill stated [regarding Jesus’ words, ‘You will seek Me...’], “That is, the Messiah, who he was; meaning, that after his departure they should be in great distress, and be very much on the inquiry after, and solicitous for the coming of

the Messiah, to be a Redeemer and Deliverer of them out of their troubles...no Messiah will appear, no Savior will be sent, no Redeemer will come to relieve them; they shall inquire, and look for one in vain, as they did.”

- Bultmann stated, “It is not Jesus whom they will destroy, when they remove him, but *themselves*.”

2. During future hardship, persecution and tribulation, such as the Fall of Jerusalem and the Temple, many will cry out for the Messiah, the Deliverer, but He will not be found.

- Less than a generation after the death of Jesus [in A.D. 70], the Temple in Jerusalem fell after a deadly siege by the Roman army.
- Josephus described the scene during the siege of Jerusalem:

“The famine increased, and the misery of the weaker was aggravated by seeing the stronger obtaining food. All natural affection was extinguished, husbands and wives, parents and children snatching the last morsel from each other. Many wretched men were caught by the Romans prowling in the ravines by night to pick up food and these were scourged, tortured and crucified. This was done to terrify the rest, and it went on till there was not wood enough for crosses.

Terrible crimes were committed in the city. The aged high-priest, Matthias, was accused of holding communication with the enemy. Three of his sons were killed in his presence, and he was executed in sight of the Romans, together with sixteen other members of the Sanhedrin. The famine grew so woeful that a woman devoured the body of her own child. At length, after fierce fighting, the Antonia was scaled, and Titus ordered its demolition.

...During the whole of this siege of Jerusalem, 1,100,000 were slain, and the prisoners numbered 97,000.”

3. At the Judgment, before Jesus *the Judge*, many will look for Jesus *the Savior*, yet, having died in their sins, it will be too late, for He will say, “Depart from Me...”.

- Jesus also states, “you **cannot** come”
  - This is the same root word [*dunamai* , *dunamai*] that we read in John 6:44, “No one **can** come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him;”
    - Once again, the word speaks to one’s **ability**.
    - Therefore, a more accurate translation may be:  
“I go away, and you will seek Me...where I am going, you do not **have the ability** to come.”

- Why, then, do they not have the ability to go where Jesus is going?
  - First of all, it is because they will “die in [their] sin.”
    - Human beings are either: (1) in sin, or (2) in Christ; (1) dead in our trespasses and sins; or (2) alive with Christ.
    - However, the Jews are **in sin**.
      - This singular, sin, is important here. It is reference to the specific sin of unbelief, that the Jews have rejected Jesus and His revelation of Himself.
      - Further, it is important to remember that we are justified by faith. To be justified is to be declared righteous in the sight of God on the basis of the work of Jesus Christ. Therefore, to die in unbelief is to die **in sin** and **unrighteousness**.

#### Verse 22

- The Jews then ask, “Surely He will not kill Himself, will He, since He says, “Where I am going, you cannot come?”
  - The last time Jesus said, “Where I am going, you cannot come” (John 7:34), the Jews, **rather prophetically**, asked “He is not intending to go to the Dispersion among the Greeks, and teach the Greeks, is He?”
  - However, here, the Jews rightly understand that Jesus is making a reference to His death. Yet, they wrongly wonder if He is referring to His own suicide.
  - According to Jewish tradition, suicide was viewed as an especially evil sin. According to Josephus, the corpse of a suicide victim would not be buried until sunset, there was no public mourning, and the individual would spend the “afterlife” in a state of damnation.
  - But, one should not miss the prophetic irony here: although Jesus will not commit suicide, He will **voluntarily lay down his life [John 10:18]...not in suicide, but in perfect obedience to His Father’s will**.

#### Verse 23

- Jesus, now, draws a comparison between the Jews and Himself, further explaining why they “cannot come” where He is going. He states, “You are from below, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world.”

- This statement serves as a reiteration of Jesus' words to Nicodemus in John 3:3, "Unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."
- In other words the spiritual **blindness** of the Jews is direct result of the truth that they have not been "born from above" / "born again."
- Rather than being "born from above" Jesus states that the Jews are "of this world."
  - To be "of this world" is to be "dead in your trespasses and sins" and to "walk according to the course of this world" and to walk "according to the prince of the power of the air," that is, Satan.

#### Verse 24

- Jesus then states, "unless you believe that I am He, you will die in your sins."
  - However, the Jews **cannot** [do not have the ability to] **believe** in Jesus because they have not been "**born from above**" [or "born again"]. Therefore, unless they are "born from above" and believe [in Christ], they will die in their sins and experience eternal separation from God. If they do believe [i.e. exercise faith], however, they will be justified by their faith, being imputed with the perfect [foreign] righteousness of Jesus Christ.
  - Read Philippians 1:29; Hebrews 12:2
  - Notice, here, that there is a **specific object** of belief that is necessary for justification: Jesus Christ.
  - This constitutes one of the clearest **ego eimi** [ego ei mi] – I AM – statements in the Gospel of John. [In the NASB, "He" is italicized, meaning that it is not in the original Greek, which reads, "unless you believe that I AM..."]
    - This phrase is, most likely, a reference to Yahweh in the Old Testament.
    - Isaiah 43:10-11, 13 states, " 'You are My witnesses,' declares the LORD, 'And my servant whom I have chosen, So that you may know and believe Me and understand that I am He. Before Me there was no God formed, And there will be none after Me. I, even I, am the LORD, And there is no savior besides Me...Even from eternity I am He...'"
    - The "ego eimi" statements of Jesus reach a climax in this chapter in Verse 58.
    - **There should be no doubt that Jesus is here claiming to be God.**

#### Verse 25

- Despite the clear Old Testament reference in the words of Jesus, as well as the tremendous knowledge of the Pharisees [with respect to the Old Testament], they remain [spiritually] blind, asking the most basic question of Jesus, “Who are You?”
  - “What is the identity of Jesus Christ?” the Jews ask.
- Jesus, then replies, “What have I been saying to you from the beginning?”
  - In other words, since the beginning of His ministry, Jesus has been perfectly consistent in the revelation of His true identity.

### Verse 26

- Once again, Jesus emphasizes the nature of His mission: to be in perfect obedience with the Father [the One who sent Him], in word, deed, and, ultimately, in judgment.

### Verse 27

- If it weren’t already clear, John adds his commentary: “They [the Jews] did not realize that He had been speaking to them about the Father.”

### Verses 28 – 29

- Then Jesus makes a truly *scandalous* statement, “When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I AM...”
- This is, likely, a reference to the Suffering Servant of Isaiah (52:13): “Behold, My servant will prosper, He will be high and lifted up and greatly exalted.”
  - First of all, Jesus is making it clear that it will be His opponents that “lift [Him] up”
  - Secondly, this is a clear reference to the cross.
    - Read John 3:14-15
    - Read also Numbers 21:6-9
  - Thirdly, Jesus is stating that then when they ‘lift Him up’ His opponents will know His true identity: the great **I AM**.
    - All who believe find the foundation of their belief in the Cross of Christ.
    - However, what Jesus is NOT saying here is that all of His opponents will believe in Him when they physically lift Him up on the cross. To fully understand Jesus’ words, it is imperative that one understand fully the meaning of the phrase “lift Him up” in the Gospel of John

Throughout the Gospel of John, the physical “lifting up” of Jesus Christ is presented, not as shameful degradation, but as glorification. The reason for this is that the Cross represents the perfect obedience of the Son to the Will of the Father – for it was nothing less than the will of the Father for the Son to be crucified. Also, the cross represents the perfect atonement for our sins and is the basis for our regeneration, faith, and subsequent justification in the sight of our Holy God. This is why the Apostle Paul states, “but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God” (1 Corinthians 1:23-24).

Further, the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus Christ represents to the return of the Son to the glory He shared with the Father before the Incarnation. Thus, those “lifting Him up” are not only, in a sense, glorifying Him, but they are also the means by which the Son will return to the Father as a Righteous Judge.

Therefore, many Jews will be ignorant of the true identity of Jesus Christ [the great I AM] until He is glorified [i.e. “lifted up”] and at the right hand of the Father as the Righteous Judge. Only then, it will be too late, as one day “every knee shall bow...and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2:5-11).

- As the 20<sup>th</sup> Century theologian Rudolph Bultmann stated, “**at the very moment when they think they are passing judgment on him, he becomes their judge.**”
- Jesus, then, restates His united with the Father, stating, “I always do the things that are pleasing to Him.”

### Verse 30

- Finally, many came to believe in Jesus because of His words.