

JOH 8:23-30 But he continued, "You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. 24 I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am the one I claim to be, you will indeed die in your sins." 25 "Who are you?" they asked. "Just what I have been claiming all along," Jesus replied. 26 "I have much to say in judgment of you. But he who sent me is reliable, and what I have heard from him I tell the world." 27 They did not understand that he was telling them about his Father. 28 So Jesus said, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am the one I claim to be and that I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me. 29 The one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what pleases him." 30 Even as he spoke, many put their faith in him.

As we come to our text this morning I find an amazing parallel between the response of the people who actually stood in the presence of Jesus Christ during His earthly ministry, and people today.

The questioning, the doubt, the obstinate attitude that Jesus is not who He says He is, is encapsulated in our text and is found world-wide today. And so, when we look at the way the Jews respond to Jesus we should never think that they somehow had a corner on the market of unbelief, despite the privilege they enjoyed of being God's chosen people through whom the Messiah would come.

But having said that it does make one wonder what more it would have taken to convince these Jews that Jesus was God in the flesh; after all, He has performed many miracles and has claimed to be sent from the Father.

And as we saw last week He has made it clear that the real problem these Jews face is not having to deal with Roman rule, but to have to face God's rule which includes punishment for their sin.

JOH 8:24 "I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am the one I claim to be, you will indeed die in your sins."

This is an amazing statement because, on one level, the Jews felt they were above being judged by God since they were His chosen.

If anyone was to be punished it would be the Gentile dogs who now have these Jews under their thumb.

And yet, this Jewish Rabbi, this Jesus, who claims to speak for God and says He has been sent by the Father, doesn't seem to side with their plight against Rome. He refuses to take sides. And in fact, He suggests that His brethren are no better than the Romans who, in the eyes of the Jews, are the real sinners.

Wondering how Jesus can be one of them and still make these statements about the Jews, characterized as sinners, we come to our text and a question asked by these Jews gathered around Jesus.

JOH 8:25 "Who are you?" ...

You can almost hear the frustration and exasperation in this question. Up to this point the issue has been what Jesus was doing and teaching. It was, where did He come from? It involved the issue of, 'in whose authority do you do these things?'

By observing all that Jesus was doing they never connected the dots as to who Jesus was. And when Jesus alluded to who He was they weren't willing to accept His word.

And He alluded to who He was on several different occasions. Did He not say, "I am the light of the word?" Did He not say, "I am the bread of life that comes down from heaven?" Who else but God could say, "whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life"? (JOH 4:14)

Jesus had been telling the Jews all along who He was, but they didn't have ears to hear. And now for the first time they quit trying to figure out who He might be, from some of what they might call cryptic language, and they ask the question that should have been asked from the beginning. Who are you?

This after all is the question the Pharisees asked of another servant of God. They were willing to come right out and get some answers as to who he might be.

JOH 1:19-23 Now this was John's testimony when the Jews of Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him who he was. 20 He did not fail to confess, but confessed freely, "I am not the Christ."
21 They asked him, "***Then who are you? Are you Elijah?***" ***He said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" He answered, "No."***
22 ***Finally they said, "Who are you? Give us an answer to take***

back to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" 23 John replied in the words of Isaiah the prophet, "I am the voice of one calling in the desert, 'Make straight the way for the Lord.'"

John the Baptist testified of Jesus as being the Lord who would travel this straight path into the life of all Jews who were looking for a deliverer, a savior of sorts. But their perception of what a savior would be excluded Jesus' teachings which didn't include revolting against Rome, or supporting the Jewish leaders of His day.

This is why He was viewed as a rebel and a threat to the Jewish nation. He wasn't on the same page as the Pharisees who had an agenda which unfortunately was not God's agenda.

Up to this point Jesus was tolerated in many ways. But the toleration moved to animosity, and as Jesus kept testifying of His Father's will to save sinners the Jewish leaders felt they couldn't let this rebel continue to affect the nation of Israel's future, which in their minds didn't need deliverance from sin as much as it needed assurances from Rome that they would remain in power.

In fact, this is precisely the mind set they had just before they ended up plotting to put Jesus to death through the agency of Rome.

JOH 11:48-50 If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and then the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation." 49 Then one of them, named Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, spoke up, "You know nothing at all! 50 You do not realize that ***it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish."***

They were willing to let the Romans kill Jesus rather than have their place of importance be jeopardized. Of course Caiaphas didn't know it at the time, but he actually was used by God with that statement to prophesy of the means by which men would have their sins atoned.

JOH 11:51-53 He did not say this on his own, but as high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the Jewish nation, 52 and not only for that nation but also for the scattered children of God, to bring them together and make them one. 53 So from that day on they plotted to take his life.

And so, the straight forward question from the Jews, “who are you,” which was finally directed to Jesus, was a question not really seeking an answer. It wasn’t their need to know Jesus as Savior, it was their need to justify their hate of Him and the course of action they would take to eliminate Him.

And so, Jesus doesn’t come right out and tell them who He is. Rather, He depends on what He has done and said in the past to answer their question. This is not unlike the question John the Baptist asked of Jesus when John was put in prison by Herod. At that point John essentially asked the same question, “who are you?”

MAT 11:1-5 After Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples, he went on from there to teach and preach in the towns of Galilee. 2 When John heard in prison what Christ was doing, he sent his disciples 3 to ask him, *"Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?"* 4 *Jesus replied, "Go back and report to John what you hear and see: 5 The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor.*

Jesus could have easily said, ‘tell John I am the Messiah.’ ‘I am the same Lord you addressed when you answered the Pharisees, "I am the voice of one calling in the desert, 'Make straight the way for the Lord.'"

But Jesus doesn’t do that. His answer centers on the works He was doing, which by the way only God could accomplish; giving sight to the blind, making the lame walk, curing diseases, opening the ears of the deaf, raising the dead.

And the answer Jesus gave to John is the same answer He gives to the Jews who ask, who are you?

JOH 8:25 "Who are you?" they asked. "Just what I have been claiming all along," Jesus replied.

What has Jesus claimed? He has claimed to be the light as He has given sight to the blind. He has claimed to be the true bread from heaven as He fed thousands with a few fish and loaves. He has claimed to be spiritual food as He exhorted the Jews to eat His flesh and drink His blood.

For a normal human being all of these claims seem bizarre. But for the Son of God they are reality. But the Jews are not willing to

acknowledge the works of Jesus in the sense that they conclude that He is the Messiah who was spoken of in their Scriptures.

They acknowledge that He is a good man, a good teacher, a good provider as long as He continues to feed them, but they will not acknowledge that He is sent from the Father as the promised seed.

JOH 8:26-27 "I have much to say in judgment of you. But he who sent me is reliable, and what I have heard from him I tell the world." 27 They did not understand that he was telling them about his Father.

Jesus always spoke of His Father. He always pointed people back to the Father, because it was the Father who made the promise to redeem Israel through the One He would send. This has been the message from Jesus all along.

JOH 5:42-43 ... I know that you do not have the love of God in your hearts. 43 ***I have come in my Father's name***, and you do not accept me; but if someone else comes in his own name, you will accept him.

JOH 7:28-29 Then Jesus, still teaching in the temple courts, cried out, ***I am not here on my own, but he who sent me is true***. You do not know him, 29 but I know him because ***I am from him and he sent me***."

The only one who could come from the Father is the one who resided with the Father in heaven; and that is the Son of God. In these very statements Jesus was making it clear that He did not originate from earth because like the Father He is eternal, and thus God Himself.

But now, as one sent from the Father, He could also stand in front of them as a true man who had taken on flesh. And this, by the way, is why the Jews had such a problem with the claims Jesus made alluding to having come from the Father. They couldn't reconcile how this man Jesus could also claim to be God whom they understood was Spirit.

Unfortunately, they had entirely missed what God had prophesied about the Son of God who had to take on flesh.

ISA 9:6-7 For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. 7 Of the increase of his government and peace there will be

no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.

What part of a child being born to Israel who will be called Mighty God, everlasting Father and Prince of Peace did these people not understand?

JOH 8:26 "I have much to say in judgment of you. But he who sent me is reliable, and what I have heard from him I tell the world."

As we said earlier in this study when Jesus says that He judges these Jews here in our text He is not judging in the sense that He is condemning them. He didn't come into the world to condemn men but to save them.

But the judgment being referred to here is a judgment which addresses our Lord's perspective on their unbelief. He is saying I have much more to say regarding the way you reject Me. I have much more to say regarding your spiritual condition. I have much more to say regarding the truth I bring and your unwillingness to believe on Me.

This is why Jesus says at the end of verse 26, "He who sent me is reliable, and what I have heard from him I tell the world."

In other words, 'the Father isn't lying to you when He sends the very One who is the truth.' 'You can trust the Father who sent Me because "I am the truth, I am the way, I am the life.'"

And yet, even these words they didn't make sense to the Jews in any spiritual way because as John tells us in JOH 8:27 "They did not understand that he was telling them about his Father."

As I've said before, if these people cannot receive the truth from the very Son of God, we shouldn't be surprised that people will not receive the truth we give them regarding the Son of God.

It's a heart problem only God can solve. The apostle John who was inspired by the Holy Spirit to write this gospel is the very John inspired by the Spirit to write the first epistle which bears his name, who said this.

1JO 5:20 We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true. And

we are in him who is true -even in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.

If left to ourselves we would never understand the spiritual things regarding the Son of God. Like these Jews whom Jesus speaks to we would also not have eyes to see or ears to hear. But despite their spiritual deadness Jesus continues to love them with the truth.

JOH 8:28 So Jesus said, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am the one I claim to be and that I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me.

Jesus is testifying of His own death and resurrection; the very means by which these Jews can come to the Father. And again, this is not the first time Jesus speaks to this issue of Him being lifted up.

JOH 3:14-15 Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, 15 that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.

Only through the cross do we find our life as Jesus Christ dies on Calvary for the penalty of our sin. The debt we owe to the Father for our sin, Jesus paid for in full that day He hung on the tree and died in our place. This is the message of the cross; the very message the apostle Paul addresses.

1CO 1:18 For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

GAL 6:14 May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

But though Christ was exalted through the cross it is His resurrection which secures our life and exalts our Lord to the right hand of the Father.

PHI 2:8-11 And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death - even death on a cross! 9 Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

This claim cannot be made of a dead Messiah, but one who is risen from the grave and lives today. And that's why Jesus can say to these Jews in JOH 8:28 "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am the one I claim to be..."

There is a sense in which the crucifixion itself bears testimony to Christ being the Messiah, but it is assumed that as day follows night, the death of Christ is followed by His life as He comes out of the tomb on the third day.

And it is because of His resurrection that many of the same Jews who were screaming for His crucifixion would be many of the same people who would see with their own eyes the resurrected Christ and believe on Him as their Lord and Savior.

Remember, that Jesus spent forty days with the disciples after His resurrection, including the twelve, and taught them about the kingdom of God and the truths of Himself as it related to their salvation and ultimate glory, as they too would one day receive their glorified resurrected physical bodies and be reunited to the Lord.

Paul encouraged the saints with these words as he relayed to them how the risen Christ personally met with many people after His resurrection.

1CO 15:3-8 For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, 5 and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. 6 After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. 7 Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, 8 and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.

Before the crucifixion of Christ our Lord knew all of this. He knew He would not stay in the grave. He knew His life would resume and that He would rise from the dead and yet death itself was something He did not look forward to.

There is a reason people fear death. It is the ultimate expression of God's wrath. Death, especially what Scripture calls the second death, is the final solution to our sin if we decide to pay it ourselves. Because in death we find we are separated from the Father forever.

In Christ's case, as He hung on that cross, He knew He would be forsaken of the Father as He took our guilt and died in our place. And what He is now trying to tell these Jews six months before His death and resurrection is that they have standing in their very presence that One who has come to redeem His people.

The Father is faithful to fulfill His promises to mankind as He sends the Son into this world. But just as He was faithful to fulfill His promises to us He was also faithful to His Son to accomplish all He promised.

JOH 8:29 The one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what pleases him."

There is something here we really don't want to miss and is central to any meaningful understanding of soteriology, the doctrine of salvation.

When we hear the word salvation we instinctively associate that with the atonement that Christ accomplished for His people. And while it is true that the Son of God/Son of man secured our salvation at the cross and His subsequent bodily resurrection, salvation is not a one person show.

Salvation was not limited to the second person of the Godhead coming into this world, as if the Son of God decided on His own that this would be a good idea. Salvation is rooted in a Trinitarian eternal decree.

When Jesus refers to His Father as the One who sent Him and that our Lord always does what pleases Him, He is specifically referring to responding, if you will, to what the Father desires, first and foremost.

And what was the Father's desire? To save a people for Himself. This is precisely what Jesus has been saying all throughout the gospel of John when He continually refers to the Father who sent Him into the world.

John 4:34 ³⁴ Jesus said to them, "*My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to accomplish His work.*"

What is that work? To secure every person chosen by the Father before the foundations of the world, so as to bring them into the Kingdom of God. Jesus points this out earlier in this gospel.

John 6:39 ³⁹ "And *this is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day.*

Salvation is built upon the Father's choosing and His son being sent into this world to ransom His elect. But salvation would not be effectual in the lives of human beings without the third person of the Godhead implementing the Father's given decree to bring the elect from death to life through regeneration.

You and I in our natural sinful state are dead in our transgressions and sin unable and unwilling to seek God and His salvation.

Ephesians 2:1 ^{NAS} And you were dead in your trespasses and sins,

But then Paul moves immediately into how one is brought from death to life and it has nothing to do with our ability to bring ourselves out of the proverbial spiritual grave on our own.

Ephesians 2:4-6 ⁴ *But God*, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵ *even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ* (by grace you have been saved), ⁶ *and raised us up with Him*, and seated us with Him in the heavenly *places*, in Christ Jesus,

This is the spiritual birth that Jesus addressed to Nicodemus when our Lord told Him that one must be born again, or born from above, to see the Kingdom of God.

This is the role of the Spirit of God who takes a heart of stone and turns it into a heart of flesh as He gives life where there was death.

Titus 3:5-6 ⁵ He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, *by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit*, ⁶ whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior,

All three persons of the Godhead are integral in our salvation as only the One true God gets the glory for anyone receiving the gift of eternal life as the Father chose, the Son was sent and the Spirit gave eyes to see and ears to hear, to supernaturally receive this gift through another God given gift called faith.

The Father sent Christ into this world, according to His eternal decree, and He was always with His Son. And you know this is true of you and me in Christ today. Sometimes we think that God has taken a vacation as it relates to our lives.

Sometimes we wonder where the Lord is as the trials of life and the hardness of life seems to overwhelm us. But we need to understand something. If the Father is always with the Son, both here in our text as He ministered to these Jews, and now in heaven, and if we are in Christ by faith, how can we possibly be out of connection with the Father at any time?

To be in Christ is to be in the Father. To have life in Christ is to have life with the Father. To receive the Prince of Peace by faith as our Savior is to be at peace with the Father.

This is what Paul meant when he wrote to the Romans.

ROM 8:1 Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,

ROM 8:39 neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

When writing to the Corinthians Paul once again puts into perspective as to what it means to be in Christ and how God the Father now places us into a new relationship with Himself as He guarantees that we will be with Him forever.

2CO 1:21-22 Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, 22 set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.

Jesus was telling these Jews in our text that the Father was guaranteeing that they would have eternal life, but only as they embraced by faith the One He sent. Jesus was telling them that the Father they claim to know is the same Father who is with Jesus in everything He does which will eventually lead to His being high and lifted up as he pays the debt and then will rise from the dead.

This is the reason you and I in Christ can know without a shadow of doubt that the Father is pleased with you and me; not because of anything we can do to earn His favor, but because we are in Christ, and with Christ He is always pleased.

Our relationship with the Father is not dependent on anything we can do to sustain that relationship; otherwise that relationship depends our ability to make it happen. The only thing that secures our relationship with the Father and sustains it is the work Christ did for us on that cross with which the Father was well pleased.

Therefore, the faith we employ in Christ' substitutionary atoning work can only be the result of the gift of faith which Christ Himself has authored.

Hebrews 12:2 ² fixing our eyes on *Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith*, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Ephesians 2:8-9 ⁸ For *by grace you have been saved through faith*; and that not of yourselves, *it is the gift of God*; ⁹ not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

But if we are in Christ, (and therefore in the Father because of Christ with whom He is pleased), then there ought to be a sense on our part of wanting to please the One who has given us life just as we're told here in our text that Jesus always did what pleased the Father.

Out of gratitude we ought to consider ourselves as blessed of God and therefore want to bless Him with lives of love and obedience as we serve Him all of our days. And if we are truly grateful for the life that we have in Christ then we ought to reconsider that the sin from which we've been delivered should be something we flee from.

This is what Paul had in mind when he wrote to the Romans.

ROM 6:10-11 The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. ¹¹ In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

And if we are alive may we live in that life and be useful servants who are a fragrant aroma to the Lord and the world. In fact, this is the language Paul uses of his own life as a servant of Christ and how our lives should be that as fragrant to God.

2CO 2:14-15 But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him. ¹⁵ For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing.

In Christ only can we be that fragrant aroma to the Lord our God as we're told in Ephesians.

EPH 5:1-2 Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children
2 and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself
up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

But being a fragrant aroma to God because of Christ doesn't
always translate into God's people being a fragrant aroma to the
world because often times we don't find ourselves being imitators
of God.

Just remember that the world smells and tastes and sees what we
claim to be in Christ. May our lives touch all of their senses with
those things that please our Savior as we do all things to please our
Father who sent Him to die for us.

And as we are faithful to love our God with all our hearts, souls,
and minds, as we give this world the truth of who Christ is and
why He came, may our God be pleased to add to the fragrant
aroma more people who embrace the Lord Jesus by faith.

And may we be a fragrant aroma in Christ to each other as we use
the gifts the Holy Spirit has given us in the body in which Christ
has placed us to His honor.

To Him be all glory!