

**Find Life in the Son:  
The Tragic Cost of Unbelief  
John 8:21-30**

**Introduction**

The verses we looked at last Sunday record Jesus' declaration that He is the Light of the world. We miss just how stunning this claim is if we divorce it from its OT roots. It is the end of the Feast of Tabernacles, during which was the ceremony of lighting the lamps to commemorate the bright shekinah glory of God that led Israel in the wilderness years. Add to that Isaiah's messianic prophecies, and you realize that Jesus is declaring He is God with us and the promised Messiah, the Savior-King of all nations. Then He makes this glorious promise: anyone who believes in Him will no longer walk in darkness but will have the light of life.

The darkness of unbelief is strong and hates the light. So the Pharisees responded to Jesus' words with a condescending, dismissive spirit, pushing back with sarcastic wordplay and technicalities. Their reaction is the poisonous overflow of deep hatred and determined unbelief. So Jesus shifts to sober warning of the tragic cost of their unbelief.

**21** So he said to them again, "I am going away, and you will seek me, and you will die in your sin. Where I am going, you cannot

come." <sup>22</sup> So the Jews said, "Will he kill himself, since he says, 'Where I am going, you cannot come?'" <sup>23</sup> He said to them, "You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. <sup>24</sup> I told you that you would die in your sins, for unless you believe that I am he you will die in your sins." <sup>25</sup> So they said to him, "Who are you?" Jesus said to them, "Just what I have been telling you from the beginning. <sup>26</sup> I have much to say about you and much to judge, but he who sent me is true, and I declare to the world what I have heard from him." <sup>27</sup> They did not understand that he had been speaking to them about the Father. <sup>28</sup> So Jesus said to them, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me. <sup>29</sup> And he who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to him." <sup>30</sup> As he was saying these things, many believed in him.

1. Inescapable Doom (21-24)
2. Spiritual Blindness (25-27)
3. Limited Opportunity (28-30)

### **1. Inescapable Doom (21-24)**

<sup>21</sup> So he said to them again, "I am going away, and you will seek me, and you will die in your sin. Where I am going, you cannot come." <sup>22</sup> So the Jews said, "Will he kill

himself, since he says, 'Where I am going, you cannot come'?"

"I am going away"

Jesus is reiterating what He's said before.

John 7:33

Jesus then said, "I will be with you a little longer, and then I am going to him who sent me."

In six months Jesus will be crucified and buried. Three days later He will rise from the dead and continue teaching His disciples. 40 days after His resurrection He will ascend into heaven and return to the God the Father who sent Him.

"You will seek me, and you will die in your sin."

Over and over they have hardened their hearts. The day is coming when their opportunity will be gone. They will seek the Lord, but it will be too late.

Isaiah 55:6-7

<sup>6</sup> "Seek the LORD while he may be found; call upon him while he is near; <sup>7</sup> let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

Proverbs talks about this deadly procrastination:

Proverbs 1:24-32

**24** Because I have called and you refused to listen, have stretched out my hand and no one has heeded, **25** because you have ignored all my counsel and would have none of my reproof, **26** I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when terror strikes you, **27** when terror strikes you like a storm and your calamity comes like a whirlwind, when distress and anguish come upon you.

**28** Then they will call upon me, but I will not answer; they will seek me diligently but will not find me. **29** Because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the LORD, **30** would have none of my counsel and despised all my reproof, **31** therefore they shall eat the fruit of their way, and have their fill of their own devices. **32** For the simple are killed by their turning away, and the complacency of fools destroys them.

You will die in your sin(s).

Possibly the most chilling of all. The end of hope. Death removes all further opportunity to repent and believe. Sin is left unatoned for. To be paid for by the sinner.

Hebrews 9:27

And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment.

## Romans 2:6-8

<sup>6</sup> He will render to each one according to his works: <sup>7</sup> to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; <sup>8</sup> but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury.

## Psalm 32:1-2

<sup>1</sup> Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. <sup>2</sup> Blessed is the man against whom the LORD counts no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit.

## Revelation 20:10-12, 15

<sup>10</sup> And the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. <sup>11</sup> Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. <sup>12</sup> And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done.

<sup>15</sup> And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

John 8:24

I told you that you would die in your sins, for unless you believe that I am he you will die in your sins.

Where I am going, you cannot come.

He had said the same thing in John 7:34

"You will seek me and you will not find me.

Where I am you cannot come."

Why can't they come where He is going? They can't come where He's going, because they refuse to trust Him as the Savior He is.

John 14:6

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

They can't come because they have rejected the only One who can get them there. Truth is, not one of us can get ourselves home to the heavenly city where God's throne is. We don't deserve to be there on our own merits. God is sinless and holy. Even on our best days we are not. Our sin is deep in us. Not just our deeds and words, but our thoughts and desires, our very nature inherited from Adam. In Adam all die. Only in Christ shall all be made alive. *We can't conquer the power of sin. We can't break the power of the grave. Only on the basis of Christ's perfect*

*righteousness can we enter heaven.* Only on account of His satisfaction of our sin penalty on the cross can our record be cleared before God. Only by His resurrection power over death can we be freed from the prison of death to enjoy life eternal.

These rejecters of Jesus cannot come where Jesus is going. Not without trusting Him to save them.

The destiny of those who trust in Jesus is exactly the opposite. Listen to the prayer of Jesus in John 17:24

Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.

He tells His disciples in John 14:2-3

<sup>2</sup> In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? <sup>3</sup> And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.

Jesus went to the cross and the grave, then rose again to open the way for those who trust Him to live forever in His rightful home, the heavenly city. But those who reject Him cannot go there.

John 8:23

He said to them, "You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world."

John 3:3

Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

Without a new birth that gives us life from God through the Holy Spirit, we remain earthbound, chained to this world in organized rebellion against God. This world, despite all its present pomp and power, is doomed to pass away.

1 John 2:15-17

**15** Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. **16** For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. **17** And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.

John 15:18-19

**18** If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. **19** If you were of the world, the world would love you as its



own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

Beware trying to accommodate the world's dogma in opposition to God's truth. It has become fashionable to do so, even among churches that claim to be gospel preaching. It is caving to unbelief and darkness. As such it is the path of inevitable doom.

### **Applications**

- What are some common beliefs that reject trusting in Jesus as the only way to heaven?
- What does Jesus teach here about the certain destiny of everyone who refuses to trust in Him as the only Savior sent by God?
- What friends of yours do you need to warn about the inescapable doom of unbelief?

### **2. Spiritual Blindness (25-27)**

<sup>25</sup> So they said to him, "Who are you?" Jesus said to them, "Just what I have been telling you from the beginning. <sup>26</sup> I have much to say about you and much to judge, but he who sent me is true, and I declare to the world what I have heard from him." <sup>27</sup> They did not understand that he had been speaking to them about the Father.

The question, "Who are you?" is not a sincere question. It is a mocking one.

Jesus has already repeatedly and plainly told them who He is. His testimony is consistent. There are none so blind as those who do not want to see.

Jesus could say more about their judgment, but He is on a mission of mercy, declaring to the world the truth God the Father has given Him to share.

Their lack of understanding regarding Jesus' statement here comes from having rejected His earlier statements. They have rejected the truth that Jesus is speaking from God the Father. So they are left in the dark as to what else He could mean. *If you reject the truth, you are left with lies. If you reject the light, you are left in the dark. Confusion rules.*

Jesus has declared to the world the message God the Father wanted delivered to a lost humanity. When you reject what Jesus taught, you reject the message God has sent. You have cut yourself off from the God of light and truth. You are left spiritually blind.

This curse of blindness comes upon those who refuse to believe in the present time. People who reject Jesus when they hear the gospel think that they will have a chance to change their minds later. There is no such guarantee.

Even if you are in good health mentally and physically, you can be trapped in spiritual blindness. Further, not one of us can guarantee even one more day of life, let alone health of body and mind.

John 9:39-41

**39** Jesus said, "For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind."

**40** Some of the Pharisees near him heard these things, and said to him, "Are we also blind?" **41** Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say, 'We see,' your guilt remains."

### **Applications**

- How is it that people exposed to the light of Christ can remain blind?
- Why is spiritual blindness such a terrible state to be in?
- What does it take for a spiritually blind person to gain his or her sight?
- Who needs you to be praying that Christ will heal them from spiritual blindness?

### **3. Limited Opportunity (28-30)**

**28** So Jesus said to them, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me. **29** And he who sent me is with

me. He has not left me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to him.”

Jesus refers to His coming crucifixion, just as He did with Nicodemus:

John 3:14-18

**14** And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, **15** that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. **16** For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. **17** For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. **18** Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

When Jesus was crucified, there was great darkness for three hours and a massive earthquake. The temple curtain between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies was torn top to bottom. When He rose from the tomb, others came out of the graves as well. The Jewish leaders' rejection of Jesus sealed their judgment. While some of them repented and believe the rest rushed toward destruction. They had missed their day of opportunity.

## Matthew 23:37-39

**37** "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!

**38** See, your house is left to you desolate.

**39** For I tell you, you will not see me again, until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'"

The Romans destroyed Jerusalem and the temple in A.D. 70. The Jews were dispersed into the nations. They did not regather until 1948.

## Romans 11:20-23

**20** . . . They were broken off because of their unbelief, but you stand fast through faith.

So do not become proud, but fear. **21** For if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will he spare you. **22** Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God's

kindness to you, provided you continue in his kindness. Otherwise you too will be cut off. **23** And even they, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God has the power to graft them in again.

Verse 30 brings a glimmer of hope. Not everyone listening to Jesus that day rejected what He was saying.

John 8:30

As he was saying these things, many believed in him.

On the day of Pentecost, fifty days after the crucifixion, thousands more will believe. Millions have come since then.

*There will always be those who refuse. But there is a remnant who hear His voice and follow Him. They realize the urgency. Now is the day of salvation. Now is the day to believe. Before it is too late.*

### **Applications**

- How does God's inevitable judgment make our spiritual decisions urgent as well as important?
- What does putting off trusting Christ till later reveal about our self-deception regarding our personal power to control our circumstances?
- What are opportunities you have that you know will not last forever?

### **Conclusion**

1. Inescapable Doom (21-24)
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Closing Song: Not in Me

## **Applications Summary**

- What are some common beliefs that reject trusting in Jesus as the only way to heaven?
- What does Jesus teach here about the certain destiny of everyone who refuses to trust in Him as the only Savior sent by God?
- What friends of yours do you need to warn about the inescapable doom of unbelief?
- How is it that people exposed to the light of Christ can remain blind?
- Why is spiritual blindness such a terrible state to be in?
- What does it take for a spiritually blind person to gain his or her sight?
- Who needs you to be praying that Christ will heal them from spiritual blindness?
- How does God's inevitable judgment make our spiritual decisions urgent as well as important?
- What does putting off trusting Christ till later reveal about our self-deception regarding our personal power to control our circumstances?
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