

The Light Shines in the Darkness – Part II
Pastor Ty Blackburn
John 8:21-31
January 20, 2013

We'll be looking at Verses 21-30 this morning. I'm so delighted that the Lord has, in His providence, brought to us two of our very dear members that were with us for a number of years, Dale and Sandy Mayfield. They are here from Illinois today. We're so glad to have you all with us. We'll worship with them. You'll want to speak a word of greeting to them. They're serving the Lord now for so many years in Ecuador on the mission field, continuing to work with BMW (Biblical Ministries Worldwide), a missions agency. They're now serving the Lord in Illinois. God is good.

John 8:21-30 is our text this morning. In it what we see is that the fundamental question is voiced. This passage is unique in the sense that the Jews actually finally ask the question directly. "Jesus, who are You?" We're going to see that in Verse 25. That is the most important question that anyone can ask. "Who is Jesus Christ?" "Jesus, who are You?" The irony is that they ask it after He's answered it. As He is revealing Himself with such clarity, and with such completeness, in ways that they should clearly grasp what He's saying, and yet it's bouncing off of them.

Now that is what is happening in the text itself, but remember that when we look at the Scripture we also want to look at the moment in time when God inspired the words to be written down. John, the apostle, is writing these words probably near the very end of the 1st Century, 85-90 A.D. He's writing this Gospel to Jews and Jewish proselytes spread throughout the Mediterranean world, Greek-speaking Jews. Those who are familiar with the Old Testament, those who have a working knowledge of the covenants and the Torah, who had been hoping for the Messiah, and were still even now hoping for the Messiah. John writes to them to convince them that Jesus is the Messiah, that He is the Christ, the Son of the Living God. He realizes he has an uphill battle in convincing them because they, like so many, are baffled by the fact that so many Jews, who saw Jesus directly, rejected Him. They are in a sense asking in their minds and their hearts, "How can so many people have seen Him and rejected Him if He truly was the Christ? How can so many God-fearing Jewish people have seen Jesus of Nazareth, and if He was truly the Christ, how could the masses have rejected Him?" because that's what happened. The overwhelming majority of Jews in Palestine rejected Jesus Christ, and as the Gospel went out throughout the Roman world with the apostles, Paul, and Peter,

and John, and the others who took the message out, what you found is that a small number of Jews would believe.

They would always go first, when you look at Paul's mission methodology. When he would go to a new area, the first thing he would do is go and preach to the Jews. He'd go to the synagogues. A new city, Corinth, or Philippi, the first place he goes, if there is a synagogue, there wasn't one in Philippi, but if there was he goes to the synagogue. If there's not one, he finds a gathering of Jews like he did in Philippi, and preaches just to some people that he knows are Jews who have gathered to worship out apart from the city. What happens is, again and again, the majority of the Jews reject the preached message. A handful, a remnant, believes, and the majority rejects, and so this is the problem that is causing many people not to even give Christianity a look. They're not even looking at Jesus because they just assume, "How can so many people be wrong about that?"

It's interesting because there are probably some in America today, though it's not a direct analogy because we're not God's people the way the Jews are, not at all, but America was blessed with the preaching of the Gospel in a way that no nation in history has been. I mean, churches have been strong, and there have been moments of great awakening, and movements of God in this country, and the Gospel has been sounded forth again, and again, and again. There are probably some that would say, as America is now turning away from the Gospel, "How can so many people be wrong?" They've heard it. At times, we may find ourselves, even as true believers, tempted to discouragement by that. When the masses reject the message it weighs on us.

John seems to be dealing with this very issue in this passage. As he recounts for us the conversation of Jesus with the Jews in the court of the temple, he's helping us to understand that this is the way it's always been and this was a way in fact, that God said it would be. Just like we saw in Isaiah 6, that God was saying, "When I reveal Myself, the masses reject. Man doesn't just need more information, he needs a new heart, and so don't be discouraged." Sometimes you have a conversation with somebody and you felt like it went really well. Sometimes you feel like, "I really botched that up," you know this opportunity to share Christ with someone. "I wish I had said it differently." But sometimes you feel like, "That was really good." I don't have that that often myself. To me, talking to unbelievers is so much more challenging than preaching in the church because first of all, you don't interrupt me. You don't ask questions. "Hey, what about that?" You know?

I did have that happen one time early in my ministry. I was preaching here at the church and some guy raised his hand. He was a visitor, and I remember thinking, “Maybe he’s stretching,” and his hand stayed up. So I finally said, “Sir, do you have a question?” And he had a question. It really wasn’t on topic either, but I tried to answer it. But when we talk to unbelievers it is challenging. They’re coming from a radically different way of thinking. As we lay out the things of the Gospel they become so clear to us, so clearly true that when we lay it out we just expect, “You’ve got to believe this. Do you not see? It’s so beautiful, it’s so elegant the way it all holds together,” and yet it falls on deaf ears. Isn’t it amazing the things that they do believe? I mean how is it that Mormonism continues to grow? That’s crazy when you look at what they really teach. How is it that Catholicism continues to grow? The reformation showed the error of Roman Catholicism. They departed, but how is it that people still go to the Catholic Church?

Well, this is the way it’s always been. Men love darkness rather than light. So what we have to do though is not be discouraged by that. We have to continue to look at the light ourselves. What we see in this passage that God does in this passage, John, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, is writing to these Greek-speaking Jews who are wondering, “How can so many people be wrong?” What he’s doing is he’s remembering, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Jesus’ words, exactly what He said, and he’s recounting them. We have in Jesus’ words basically this clear presentation of who He is. And the real question is: Who is Jesus Christ and how do you answer that? Not by looking at polls. It’s irrelevant what the polls say. How do you decide who Jesus Christ is? You look directly at Jesus Christ. That is the way that we are to continue to strengthen our own souls as we try to walk with God and be faithful to Him. Keep looking at Christ. As we present Him, there’s a place for reasoning with people, and trying to show them the logic and truthfulness of the Gospel in general, but you want to get to Christ. “I want to tell you about Jesus. Look at Jesus. Get in the Gospels and just look at Jesus. Ask God to help you as you open the Gospel to see who Jesus is.” That’s exactly what John does for us in this passage. He allows us to look at Jesus. Let’s look at John 8:21.

John 8:21-30 ~ 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.” 22 So the Jews were saying, “Surely He will not kill Himself, will He, since He says, ‘Where I am going, you cannot come’?” 23 And He was saying to them, “You are from below, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world. 24 Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.” 25 So they were saying to Him, “Who are You?” Jesus said to them, “What have I

been saying to you from the beginning? 26 I have many things to speak and to judge concerning you, but He who sent Me is true; and the things which I heard from Him, these I speak to the world.” 27 They did not realize that He had been speaking to them about the Father. 28 So Jesus said, “When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things 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.” 30 As He spoke these things, many came to believe in Him.

Let’s pray together.

Father, we ask that You might even now speak to us by Your Spirit. Through Your Word, let us hear the voice of Jesus, and see the glory of Jesus. We pray this in Your Name, amen.

The way to evaluate Christianity is to look at Jesus, to evaluate Jesus Christ. We preach a person, we preach a living Savior, not a way of life, not a philosophy of how to live. We preach a person. If you want to know a person there are certain ways that you know a person. In fact, I’ve been recently reading a biography of Abraham Lincoln. I started it awhile back. It’s one of those things I pick up and every now and then I’ll read it. Abe Lincoln, I don’t think it’s the one that the movie is based on. I haven’t seen the movie but I’ve heard there’s one that the movie was based on. Anyway, this book is good. I love to read biographies. I’ve read biographies of godly men like Martyn Lloyd-Jones, or Jonathon Edwards, but also biographies of great leaders like Washington, or Churchill, one of my favorite people to study. And now, Lincoln. When you want to know somebody, when somebody wants to tell you who someone is, like the author of this book, they do certain things. They tell you a sense of where they came from, where were they going with their life? They tell you about their primary relationships. What were they like in their defining relationships? Then about their essential character, you deal with these things.

It’s interesting that this passage itself, Verses 21-30, basically we’re going to look at under four points that are a lot like that. There is a sense in which Jesus, as He’s talking to this crowd, is telling them who He is in much the same way as a biographer would because He tells them where He’s going. He talks about His destiny, that’s the first point we’re going to look at. Then He talks about His origins, where He came from. Then He talks about His defining relationship. And then He reveals and unveils His essential character. Those are the four points we’re

going to look at this morning—destiny, origin, relationship, and character. They’re wanting to know, “Who are You?” and Jesus has been telling them. In fact, that’s how He responds. When they say, “Who are You?” What does He say? Verse 25:

John 8:25 ~ So they were saying to Him, “Who are You?” Jesus said to them, “What have I been saying to you from the beginning?”

“I’ve been telling you.” In fact, the tense of the verb there, ‘have been saying’ is actually the present tense verb. It literally says, ‘From the beginning I am saying to you.’ “I’ve been continually telling you who I am, and you’re just not hearing.” They’re asking, “Who are You?” and He basically is giving them in this passage those four points—His destiny, His origin, His relationship, and His character. To understand who Jesus Christ is, it is incumbent that we look at those things.

1) Destiny:

He says first of all concerning His destiny, Verses 21-22:

John 8:21 ~ 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.”

It’s repeated by the Jews on their lips. John lets us have them repeat this in Verse 22.

John 8:22 ~ So the Jews were saying, “Surely He will not kill Himself,...

They totally misunderstand what He’s saying.

John 8:22 ~ ... will He, since He says, ‘Where I am going, you cannot come?’”

It’s always interesting when the text repeats something like that. I mean, they could have just said, “They were puzzled by this and they wondered if He was killing Himself.” But no, they actually say and John records for us, Jesus’ words a second time. ... ***‘Where I am going, you cannot come?’***” It’s emphatic. Where is Jesus going that they cannot come? When we look at the full teaching of Gospel of John, we see clearly that where Jesus is going is to the presence of God, with the presence of His Father. He’s going to the Father, and He’s telling them they cannot come to where He’s going. In fact, we look just a few places in John just to see this. Jesus was defined by His destiny, His whole life and ministry. He came from

Heaven, we're going to see, but He's going back to Heaven. He never lost sight of that. His destiny was always before Him. When you read about even just great men, somebody like I mentioned, Churchill, or Lincoln, or Washington, there is a sense of destiny about many of these great men. Some sense that they were called to something special. Not in a saving way, but that God, in His gracious providence, governing of the affairs of men, sets apart some men to play a role. There is a sense in which Churchill saw that, Washington saw that. Well how much more is Jesus in being continually in view of where He's going? That's the most impressing thing on Him, His destiny to go back to the Father. John 13:1, the beginning of the account of the Passover meal, the Lord's Supper. Before Jesus takes the towel and washes the disciples' feet, look what He says in John 13:1.

John 13:1 ~ Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He would depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.

He knows that His hour has come to depart out of the world. Where is He going? To the Father. You see it also in Chapter 16, these five chapters, Chapters 13-17 cover that last supper. You see Jesus' last words to His disciples. In John 16:5, He says:

John 16:5 ~ "But now I am going to Him who sent Me; and none of you asks Me, 'Where are You going?'"

"I'm going to Him who sent Me." Chapter 17:5, the great High Priestly Prayer which we looked at last summer. It's a part of our study on unity. We skipped ahead to John 17.

John 17:5 ~ Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.

"Glorify Me with a glory I had with You. I'm coming back, Father." In fact, He says as much in Verse 11.

John 17:11 ~ I am no longer in the world; and yet they themselves are in the world, and I come to You.

Jesus is set apart by the fact that He is unique in that He is able to go to the Father. He is a man, He's fully God, He left the glory of Heaven, became a man, and it's what sets Him apart from every other man is that He is qualified to go to the

Father. His destiny is to go to the Father and the problem that we all have is that we are not. We are not able to go to God, that's why He says to them, "You will die in your sins." Back to John 8:21, He says:

John 8:21 ~ 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."

In fact those words 'cannot come' would be better translated in my opinion, 'you are not able to come'. It's a word which speaks about ability. You are not able to come, you do not have the power to come. You are powerless to come to God. You do not have the resources. When He says, ***...you will seek Me...*** what does He mean by that? In Verse 21:

John 8:21 ~ ..."I go away, and you will seek Me, and will die in your sin;..."

I think He's talking about the fact that the Jews will one day continue to seek the Messiah, they'll continue to seek salvation, but they're going to die in their sins because they haven't sought it through Him. He's revealed His glory to them, He's shown them the way of salvation. They've rejected Him and they will continue to seek salvation. This is the reality that everyone who goes to hell goes to hell because they will not bow the knee to God and accept His way of salvation, but everyone who goes to hell wishes they were saved. They would love to be saved, but they don't want to be saved enough to come God's way. They don't want to be saved enough to humble themselves and follow Christ. But no one wants to burn in hell, and that's what He's saying to the Jews. "You don't want to go through the misery you're going to experience in 70 A.D. when you're going to be looking for a Messiah to come deliver you from the Romans who are going to destroy Jerusalem. You'll be looking for Me then and you will not find Me because I'm with the Father. You missed it!" Such is the tragedy. It's too often, so often is repeated that people have Christ proclaimed to them reject Him and yet are still looking for salvation. There is salvation in no other Name but the Name of Jesus.

So He says to them, "Where I'm going you are not able to come. I'm going to the Father, but you cannot come." Something glorious about the plan of salvation, obviously in His deity Jesus had always been with the Father, as John says in the prologue of His Gospel. He was in the beginning with God. But in coming and taking humanity to Himself, He lives a perfect human life, and He is the first man that is truly, intrinsically, experientially qualified to walk into the Throne Room of God. There is no other. He is able to ascend the hill of the Lord.

Psalm 24:3 ~ Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? And who may stand in His holy place? 4 He who has clean hands and a pure heart,...

Jesus Christ is that man, and there is no other. The only way that you or I can get there is if we attach ourselves to the One who is able, through faith. If you believe in Him you become a part of Him. You become one who is in Christ and when He walks into the Throne Room of God, you on His train walk into the Throne Room of God. Otherwise there is no access. He is set apart. There is no other One who can do that. Many clever philosophers, many clever religious leaders who can sound wise with the wisdom of this world, and yet they cannot gain access to the Throne of God. So He's unique in where He's going, His destiny.

2) Origin:

Secondly, He is unique in His origin. He follows it right up after talking about His destiny, "Where I go you cannot come," Verses 21-22. Then He says in Verse 23 He talks about His origin. He was saying to them, "You are from below, I am from above. You are of this world. I am not of this world. Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins." "We have very different origins," Jesus said. In fact, the text is emphatic. I mentioned to you a number of times, we see that Jesus is doing something and John is recording it for us, that His emphasis is on the pronouns. It doesn't show up in the text, but what you have here is really the forces, "You yourselves are from below. I myself am from above. You yourselves are of this world. I myself am not of this world." Remember I mentioned to you before in previous messages that the Greek verb, like many other languages, has the pronoun in it. It's already there, so the form of the verb says, "You are." You plural are. 'Ya'll are' is already in the Greek verb. I think that comes from Southern Greece, "Ya'll are." So, "Ya'll are from below." It's already there in the verb but what happens is in the passage the Greek pronoun 'you' is added. So it says, "You all, ya'll are from below." I'm sorry about that. That's distracting to give that 'ya'll'. "You yourselves are from below," and the same thing is true with, "I am from above." It's already there in the verb 'I am', but He adds the ego, the pronoun for I is added again to say, "I myself am from above." So He's making it emphatic, the distinction, the distance that exists between Him and His listeners. "You are categorically from below. I am categorically from above." "You categorically are from this world. This is a world system that is opposed to God. You were a part of this realm. You have arisen from this realm. I have come from somewhere entirely different. I am not from this world," Jesus is saying. He's claiming to be the exclusive person that that is true of. There is no one else that is from above. Only Jesus of Nazareth. In fact, He's made this clear. He said in the passage, "I've been

telling you this from the beginning. Look back at John 3. Look at His origin in His message to Nicodemus when he's talking to him. He says when Nicodemus is not understanding. He says:

John 3:10 ~ Jesus answered and said to him, "Are you the teacher of Israel and do not understand these things?"

He's talking about the new birth. "You need a new heart." Completely consistent with everything the Old Testament says. The Old Testament is telling you, "You need a new heart. I'm saying it and now you don't understand? Why is it that you don't understand? It's been so clear. It's been so crystal clear, how can you not understand?" Jesus explains in Verses 11 to 13:

John 3:11 ~ Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know and testify of what we have seen, and you do not accept our testimony. 12 If I told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things?

And here's the key thing, His origin:

John 11:13 ~ No one has ascended into heaven, but He who descended from heaven: the Son of Man.

What He's saying is, "I'm telling you the truth of God which was in the Old Testament, but you don't understand it because you don't have the ability to understand it. You are so much of this realm that you cannot comprehend, but I have come from God. No one else has gone up to God." There are people who claim to have gone up to God. People claim to have talked to angels. Joseph Smith, that's his claim. The angel Maroni came to him and gave him that nonsensical, foolish religion that it's amazing anyone can believe. We were talking on the way home last night, and Maggie was mentioning, "Is it true they really believe that everybody's going to have their own planet?" Yes, they believe that every man is going to have his own planet with many wives. That's what they believe. You've got to be kidding. It's true. How? I don't know. That just shows you people will believe anything before they'll believe the Gospel. So he claims to have gotten a word from heaven, but Jesus says no one has gotten a word from heaven. The word from heaven comes from the One who came down from heaven, and there's one man that came down from heaven.

Look throughout the span of history. Of all the great men, none of them can claim to have come down from heaven. They can claim it, but they're wrong. One man has demonstrated He did come down from heaven, and that's Jesus Christ. He is unique in His origin. John the Baptist in this same passage he follows up. John's last testimony is Verses 22 to 36. John, the writer of the Gospel, brings up John the Baptist, a separate John who's been testifying to Jesus, and look what John the Baptist says about Jesus in Verse 31:

John 3:31 ~ "He who comes from above is above all, he who is of the earth is from the earth and speaks of the earth. He who comes from heaven is above all.

His apostles are basically coming to him, saying, "Your ministry is really suffering. Jesus' ministry is growing. We need to do something." They were kind of like coming with a church growth plan. "That other church is really growing. We need to do something." John's like, "No, you don't understand. I only came to point toward Him. I must decrease and He must increase. Why must I decrease and He must increase? Because He who is from above is above all. I'm from the earth and I can only speak from the earth, but He who is from above is above all. He is set apart. Let me get out of the way so that you can look more directly at Jesus Christ."

That is the essence of witnessing, isn't it? It's the perfect witness. Let me get out of the way so that you can see Jesus. So he is unique in His origin. No one else has seen what He has seen. No one else has been where He has been, and that's why He spoke with authority. When He spoke, people's ears, they sensed something that they had never sensed before. Here is this man who speaks not as the Scribes and the Pharisees speak. He speaks as One having authority. He speaks what He has seen, what He knows, what He's heard directly from God. So He's unique in His destiny, and He's also unique in His origin.

3) He's Unique in His Relationship:

That's what he continues to unfold for us here as we look at this passage back to John 8. He's basically said, "Look at Me where I'm going. Look at Me where I'm from," and He's going to go into the next point, but we're going to skip over it because it's the main point. "Look at who my essential character is. I AM." And then they say, "Who are You?" It's interesting His answer at that point is to go to His relationship. "What have I been saying to you from the beginning?" Verse 26:

John 8:26 ~ I have many things to speak and to judge concerning you, but He who sent Me is true; and the things which I heard from Him, these I speak to the world.

John 8:29 ~ 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.

It's interesting and instructive that Jesus does things that to me, even as I understand the unfolding of who He is in the Gospel, are counterintuitive. I mean, I would expect Him at this point just to keep hammering, "I AM," and maybe go back and exposit from Isaiah, which we're going to look at in a minute, but He doesn't do that. What He does is, "You're wondering who I am," and what He does is, "Let Me tell you about My Father and My relationship with My Father." This is something that you will see again, and again, and again, and many people stumble at this. It says that He is the eternal God. He's Yahweh. We're going to see that clearly in the passage, but as God Himself, He comes in dependence as the Son upon the Father, and as a man living a perfect human life, He lives a life of complete utter dependence upon His Father. He lives as true man should live, always doing the will of his Father, not doing His own will but the will of His Father. That's what He does. He says, "If you want to understand who I am, you've got to know My relationship."

I mentioned earlier if you read biographies, a good biography always talks about how somebody's relationships are. Lincoln, what was his relationship with his wife, his children, his political friends, his political enemies? You understand something of who he is when you see someone in relationship. Well, how do you know who Jesus is? Look at His defining relationship, and the quintessential relationship for Jesus is always His relationship with His Father. That is what He is always talking about.

In fact, the phrase 'sent me' there twice, Verse 26, "He who sent Me is true," and Verse 29, "He who sent Me is with Me," 40 times in the Gospel of John you have the verb sent. 33 times He says, "Sent Me." Another 7 times, He's talking about being sent. He doesn't say, "Sent Me," literally but He's talking about, "I'm the One who was sent. So you understand who I am? I am the One who is sent. I've not come to do My own will but the will of Him who sent Me (John 6:38). That means, "I'm not here to do what I want to do. I'm here to do His will. In John 4:34, what did He say?

Remember when the apostles were hungry and they went into town to get something to eat, and Jesus is out there talking to the woman at the well? They come back, she scurries away, and they're saying, "Hey, we got food. It's time to eat." They're pulling out the brown bag. "What have we got here? Egg salad," or whatever it was. So they're pulling it out, and Jesus says, "I have food to eat that you don't know about." "You mean You had a sandwich tucked away and You didn't tell us? Who gave Him a sandwich?" That's what they're doing. They're asking that. He took this opportunity to tell them, "Look, it's not about food." He says, "My food and My drink is to do the will of Him who sent Me." What a powerful image.

How much we think about food and drink. The Lord made us to think about food and drink, but sometimes we get carried away with it, but He made us to need to eat three times a day or however many meals we need. Some people say five, or whatever, but it's several times a day. He could have made us to eat once a week like the gas tank. "I filled up on Tuesday and I'm good til next Tuesday," depending on what kind of car you drive. But He didn't make us to need to eat once a week. He made us to need to eat regularly. Why? Because that was just part of who He is. He wants us to enjoy the bounty of His goodness every day, and all the different things, and a palate, and the taste buds that He's given us. All these things are by God in His kindness, and what a joy it is to sit down with those whom we love and eat together, and enjoy food and fellowship together.

This is what God has made us to do, and Jesus says as the true Man who needs to eat just like we do, who has the taste buds just like we do, who was hungry and thirsty that day, He said, "What satisfies My soul more than anything, far more than eating or drinking, is to do the will of Him who sent Me. That's what thrills me." That's what man was created to be. That's what you and I are supposed to be. How woefully short we fall of that, but praise God how perfectly He fulfilled it. He said, "If you want to know who I am, you've got to look at My relationship." He's always talking about the Father. He says here in Verse 26, "Listen, I have many more things to speak and judge concerning you, but He who sent Me is true, and the things which I heard from Him, these I speak. So what am I saying? I'm only saying to you what I heard from Him." Jesus is saying in His ministry that He's not having any original thoughts. In the way that God has ordained in the triune Godhead to say is Jesus is dependent upon the Father, submissive to the Father, though equal in power in glory, and He is saying only what the Father tells Him to say. Look at Verse 29:

John 8:29 ~ 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.”

“Who am I? I am One who is with the Father even now. He’s with Me. He’s not left Me alone. He’s never left Me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him. It’s not just what I say, but I only do the things that He wants Me to do.”

In fact, we saw earlier in John’s Gospel in John 5:19 and 5:30, we see Jesus says the same thing. He says, “Listen, the things that you see me doing, the works that you see Me doing are the works that I saw the Father doing, and the things that you hear Me saying are the things that the Father has told Me to say.” This is His refrain again and again. His relationship with the Father is perfect intimacy, oneness of mind, oneness of heart. So this is such a correction to those who would want to be polytheistic, and as the Jews would have struggled with being polytheistic. Jesus is clearly going to show Himself to be God. He is doing that throughout the Gospel. He does it right here, but He’s making clear He’s not a separate – it’s not like there’s God the Father and God the Son. No, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are One. They are three in person but One in essence, One in purpose, One in power and glory. There’s never been one that could say that about his relationship with the Father. Who has had a relationship with God like this? No one can say He’s never left you. No, every son of Adam and daughter of Eve, God has abandoned because He’s too Holy to dwell with sin, but there’s One Man who could say, “He’s never left Me, because I always do the things that are pleasing to Him.”

And then finally, not just His relationship, not just His destiny, His origin, and His relationship that make Him unique, but His character, His essential being is categorically different.

John 8:24 ~ Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins;

That’s three times he says in the passage, “You will die in your sins.” The most important thing in the world is to come to know who Jesus is and to bow before Him in worship and submission and glad adoration, and if you don’t, you will die in your sins. Three times:

John 8: 21 ~ ...and will die in your sin;

John 8:24 ~ ...you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.”

It's interesting the first time He says, "You will die in your sin." It's singular in Verse 21. Look at that:

John 8 21 ~ ...“I go away, and you will seek Me, and will die in your sin;

In Verse 24, He repeats that phrase, but He says *in your sins* plural. What's going on there? I think in Verse 21, He's speaking of the sin of unbelief. If you don't believe, then that sin will damn you, and it's that sin and that sin alone that keeps people out of heaven ultimately. That is the sin. In fact, that is said by John in his sermon I mentioned a little bit earlier, when he says, "He who believes in the Son has eternal life. He who does not believe in the Son does not have eternal life, but the wrath of God abides in him." That's the sin of unbelief, but if you don't believe, then you're going to die in your sins (plural). Then the avalanche of the weight of all of your guilt and pollution, for every sin that you or I have ever committed, if we're not in Christ, will fall upon us, and the wrath of God will fall upon us for that incredible weight of sin. Run. Flee from the wrath to come. Jesus Christ will save, but you come in faith.

What do you have to believe? Verse 24: ***...for unless you believe that I am...*** Now, your translation may say, "I am He." The NAS has the "He" in italics, which shows that they're supplying it. Whenever they use an italicized word, they're supplying it to help it read more naturally. But the text in Greek actually says, "For unless you believe that I am, you will die in your sins."

John 8:28 ~ then you will know that I am, and I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me.

When Jesus says this, we've seen in John's Gospel, those of you who have been with us, that the *I AM* sayings of Jesus are critical to John's revelation, the unveiling of who Jesus is. You have this expression again, and again, and again on the lips of Jesus, "I AM." Seven times, you have it with a predicate. You have it *I AM* like we saw in John 6:35 with the bread of life. You have in John 8:12 the immediate context of these verses where you have, "I am the Light of the world." In Chapter 10:7, you have, "I am the door of the sheep." In Chapter 10:11, you have, "I am the Good Shepherd." In Chapter 11:25, "I am the resurrection and the life." In Chapter 14:6, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No man comes to the Father but by Me." And then the seventh is in John 15:1, "I am the true vine. You are the branches."

You also have a number of I AM statements that are absolute, where Jesus says, “I am,” and He’s making a claim to divinity. The first is in John 6:20 when Jesus is walking on the water. Remember the disciples go on ahead. The storm is raging and they’re not making progress on their attempt to go across the Sea of Galilee, and they see a Man walking across the water, and they’re terrified. The text says that Jesus says, “It is I.” But in Greek what He said according to the text, is, “Ego eimi.” “I AM.” Immediately the water is calm and they are where they’re supposed to be. They take Him in the boat and they’re at their destination, and this same thing is going on here. In Verse 24, in Verse 28, He says, “Ego eimi,” or “I am.” He’s going to say it again in Verse 58, and they’re going to pick up stones to kill Him. “Before Abraham was, I am.”

So this is picking up momentum here, this ego eimi, and what’s happening, I think, in John’s crafting this under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, remembering exactly what to include, what he’s including of the story – because he doesn’t tell us everything that Jesus said or everything that Jesus did, but he’s helping his readers to get a sense of the background to that phrase, “I AM.” We’ve mentioned to you before that the ultimate background is Exodus 3:14, when the Lord appears to Moses and Moses asks the Lord, “When I go to the people and say that You’re going to be delivered, they shall say, ‘What is God’s name?’ What am I to say to them? What is Your name?” and the Lord says, “I am that I am. So you’re to tell them that I AM has sent me to you.”

That’s the ultimate background, but there’s an immediate background I think that’s in view in Isaiah, because that I AM statement gets picked up in Isaiah in the Servant of the Lord passages which are in Isaiah 42 to 53. Turn with me to Isaiah. I want us to see some of these texts, and what I’m saying is the wording of the ego eimi would resonate with – remember I said we’ve got Jewish listeners, a Jewish audience, but they speak Greek. They read the Greek Bible which is the Septuagint, and when you look at the Septuagint’s translation of Isaiah, what you see is eight times from Chapter 41 to Chapter 48, in Isaiah, you have this phrase on the lips of the Lord: ego eimi. “I am.” It’s usually translated in your Bible as ‘I am He’ or ‘It is I’, but it’s ego eimi, and as Jesus is using this, as John is writing these words down, he’s wanting his listeners to think about the background of Isaiah.

“Wait a minute. What Jesus is saying is that He is the Servant of the Lord that Isaiah prophesied of, that there would come a day when a unique Servant of the Lord with this wonderful relationship with Yahweh, the Ebed-Yahweh, the Servant of the Lord would come and He would do the will of Yahweh, and He will bring salvation. He’ll be anointed with the Spirit.”

When you read through Isaiah 42 to 48, what you see is this Servant of the Lord is so closely identified with the Lord Himself that it begs the question, “Is He Himself God? Is the Servant divine?” And when you put it in context of the whole of the book, if you’re reading Isaiah carefully and thoughtfully, if they had been, if their eyes had been opened, they would have seen. Remember, you have these Old Testament prophecies of a Messiah to come, but Isaiah, it’s like I mentioned earlier. He has that great vision of the Lord in the temple, and it’s like the Lord put him on a mountaintop above every other mountain for the prophets, and he could see farther. His vision was clearer. He had the eagle eye to see, and the Lord gives him these things.

Listen to what he says in Isaiah 7:14. This coming Savior, what’s His Name going to be? He’s going to be born of a virgin.

Isaiah 7:14 ~ ... Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel.

He’s not just going to be a man. His Name means *God with us*. You see? He’s preparing the soil. The Servant of the Lord that’s coming is not a mere man. A true man, yes, but not merely man. Then Isaiah 9:6, two chapters later, is the passage we love to read at Christmas.

***Isaiah 9:2 ~ The people who walk in darkness
Will see a great light;
Those who live in a dark land,
The light will shine on them.***

Then you think about the resonance there with this passage, “I am the Light of the world. The one who believes in Me will not walk in darkness. The one who follows Me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life.” Then there’s Isaiah 9:6 with the promise of the coming Savior:

Isaiah 9:6 ~ For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.

We see He’s called four things: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God. A son is to be born whose name will be Mighty God. His third Name is Everlasting Father. His Name will be Everlasting Father. He will be so closely identified to God that He is as the Father. So when Jesus says, “He who has seen Me has seen the Father,” you

see all of this resonance. And then in the Servant of the Lord passages, He's going to be One who is uniquely filled with the Spirit:

Isaiah 42:1 ~ "Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold;...

He starts unpacking. There are four great servant songs from 42 to 53, concluding with that glorious passage of Isaiah 53:

Isaiah 53:5 ~ But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities;

He was crushed for our iniquities. He was bruised for our transgressions. He was pierced. That's the glorious picture of the cross. Those are the Servant of the Lord passages, but what you see in the midst of these passages is you have Ego eimi again and again. First of all, Chapter 43:10:

Isaiah 43:10
"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. ...

That is Ego eimi right there. "That you may know and believe and understand that I AM." And in fact, I think Jesus is alluding to this passage when He says, "You must believe that I AM." He's alluding to this. "If you want to be saved, you must believe that I AM."

Before Me there was no God formed,
And there will be none after Me.
11 "I, even I, am the Lord,
And there is no savior besides Me.

And then turn over to Verse 25:

Isaiah 43:25 ~ "I, even I, am the one who wipes out your transgressions...

Do you know what that says in the Greek? It says in the Septuagint, "Ego eimi, ego eimi, the one who wipes out your transgressions." I am *I am* the one who wipes out your transgressions." That's what it says in the text. What a glorious picture of Jesus Christ, and He comes saying, "Ego eimi." It just continues.

In Chapter 45:4, when he's talking about the salvation that will come from Babylon, he says:

***Isaiah 45:4 ~ "For the sake of Jacob My servant,
And Israel My chosen one,
I have also called you by your name;
I have given you a title of honor
Though you have not known Me.
5 "I am the Lord, and there is no other;
Besides Me there is no God.***

"Ego eimi." It continues on throughout the passage. What you also have in the passage, and we're not going to take time to go through it, but if you read the Servant of the Lord passage from Chapter 41 to Chapter 53, what you'll see is interspersed you have pictures of the glory of Yahweh and the Servant of the Lord, and these Ego eimi statements, and then you have the Lord talking about the incredible unbelief of the Jews. Over, and over, and over again, it talks about, "You're deaf, you're blind," and so the idea is the glory of God is being lifted up, and yet the Jews are not believing.

So when you think about now back to John, John inspired by the Holy Spirit writing to this audience, saying, "Listen to what Jesus said. Look what happened," alluding to Isaiah, the Ego eimi passages, he's saying, "It's just like the Lord said it would be. He said when His Servant was revealed that He's going to come and He's going to have the Spirit without measure. He's going to come and bring a great salvation, and yet they will not hear. It's exactly as God said."

How horrible it is, but how comforting it is to know that the Lord said it was going to be this way. It was just as He said it would be, and the message for us is take comfort. Rejoice that God has granted you eyes to see and ears to hear. Marvel and say with the hymn writer, "Why was it that I was chosen to come to the feast when thousands perish?" And don't let their unbelief discourage you. Mourn for their unbelief. Pray for them that God might grant them eyes to see, but there is no room for pride around the foot of the cross. It's only by grace, but our message is Jesus Christ. They may reject Christianity, but they reject it so often without even looking, and the answer is for them to look at Jesus. There's never been a man who could go where He went. There's never been a man who came from where He came. There's never been a man who had a relationship with God like He had, and there's never been a man who could say, "I AM." He is our message. He is our joy. He is our salvation. He is our hope.

Let's pray together...

Father, we rejoice in the glory of Your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. We thank You for the glorious salvation which You've made known. We pray for those that are here today who have not yet repented and believed, who have not yet humbled themselves before You, who have heard and seen at some level, but have not really heard and not really seen. We pray that You might grant them eyes to see and ears to hear, and grant them grace to cry out to You even now from their hearts, "Lord, help me see. Help me hear. Help me understand." We thank You that You are a God who is rich in mercy. May Jesus Christ be praised. We pray in His Name, Amen.

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