

## **John 48 – You Are of This World**

**03/16/2025**

### **Scripture 1: (Jn. 8:12-30 ESV)**

Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

So the Pharisees said to him, "You are bearing witness about yourself; your testimony is not true."

Jesus answered, "Even if I do bear witness about myself, my testimony is true, for I know where I came from and where I am going, but you do not know where I come from or where I am going. You judge according to the flesh; I judge no one. Yet even if I do judge, my judgment is true, for it is not I alone who judge, but I and the Father who sent me. In your Law it is written that the testimony of two people is true. I am the one who bears witness about myself, and the Father who sent me bears witness about me."

They said to him therefore, "Where is your Father?"

Jesus answered, "You know neither me nor my Father. If you knew me, you would know my Father also." These words he spoke in the treasury, as he taught in the temple; but no one arrested him, because his hour had not yet come.

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."

So the Jews said, "Will he kill himself, since he says, 'Where I am going, you cannot come'?"

He said to them, "You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. I told you that you would die in your sins, for unless you believe that I am he you will die in your sins."

So they said to him, "Who are you?"

Jesus said to them, "Just what I have been telling you from the beginning. 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."

They did not understand that he had been speaking to them about the Father. 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. 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."

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

## Sermon:

At some time around and probably after the Feast of Tabernacles, Jesus continued teaching at the Temple in Jerusalem. His ministry was very public and He was freely accessible to anyone who wanted Him: whether they wanted to learn from Him or if they wanted to oppose Him. Jesus taught people in a normal and ordinary manner by answering their difficult questions and, while His answers could be considered controversial or unorthodox, no one did anything to silence Him or to prevent His teaching ministry. Thus Jesus confidently and publicly declared, *"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."*; claiming the divine prerogative for Himself, *"...but no one arrested him, because his hour had not yet come."* Instead of arresting Him for blasphemy, as would have been proper, the Jewish leaders attacked the fact of His testimony rather than the substance of His claim.

Instead of arresting Him, or "de-platforming" and "canceling" Him, or otherwise silencing Him, they did (and could do) nothing because it was not yet the *kairos*: the divinely appointed time for His passion. It was not yet the right time for Jesus to suffer and die. Therefore, *"...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.'"* Did you hear that and, do you understand that?

**Jesus** told them that they would *"die in [their] sins"* and that they could not come to where He would be. He plainly told them that they were not, and would not be saved. That is a truly terrifying thought. But perhaps we might think that Jesus only meant right then, at that moment; that He only meant their immediate and present condition? Could they still yet be saved, **if** they were to choose to believe in Him? Might they?

Remember, Jesus would not and cannot lie. Although He might seem to speak ambiguously at times, these were absolute statements and declarations that He was making; unchangeable and certain. Part of our confidence in recognizing this comes from another statement, elsewhere recorded by John, when *"Simon Peter said to [Jesus], 'Lord, where are you going?' Jesus answered him, 'Where I am going you cannot follow me now, but you will follow afterward.'"* (Jn. 13:36 ESV). Yet also, John tells us here that, *"As [Jesus] was saying these things, many believed in him."*, meaning that this negative pronouncement was only meant for those would not ever believe, since nothing would change their minds and the Holy Spirit would not cause faith to be birthed within their hearts. Jesus's declaration of condemnation truly was absolute and certain for those whom it was absolute and certain. It was not directed against those present, "not yet regenerated" Elect.

Regardless, we can understand the confusion Jesus's hearers must have felt hearing this because, apart from us already knowing the Gospel and believing in Christ, it sounds like nonsense and crazy talk. That is why they wondered, *"Will he kill himself, since he says, 'Where I am going, you cannot come'?"*, even though that does not feel like the logical, next step in progression after assuming that Jesus might go into a self imposed exile among the Hellenist Jews and Greeks (7:35-36). The implication of their question should have been unthinkable for them. Suicide is "self murder", a breaking of the sixth commandment which, under the Temple sacrifice system, could not be atoned for practically, even if one were repentant. Suicide should be unthinkable for any believing and devout Jew, just as it should be for any mentally healthy human person. Therefore John, by suggesting that the Jewish leadership thought Jesus was contemplating suicide at this point:

- first, it implies that they were considering Him to be a crazy person;
- and second, by their reactions and response to Him, they were considering that (what they believed to be) His "delusions" were dangerous to their social order.

Then, Jesus broke it down for them. He tried to explain it so that they might understand, even if they did not believe Him. He told them, *"You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world."*

*I told you that you would die in your sins, for unless you believe that I am he you will die in your sins.”*. He put it into opposing, binary terms.

- They are from “below”, while He is from “above”.
- They belong to this **fallen**, disobedient, and sinful world: the *kosmos*; while He belongs to the perfect, obedient, and holy world of heaven {Greek: *ouranos*}.
- They belong to “the darkness”, while He belongs to “the light”.
- They are totally evil: every portion of themselves is corrupted and tainted by the imperfection of sin; while He is utterly good: the totality of His whole being is absolutely good, for He “...*is light, and in him is no darkness at all.*” (1 Jn. 1:5 ESV).
- Jesus is “*the light of life*”, while they shall die, and are dead, in their sins and trespasses (Ephesians 2:1-10).

Again, Jesus verbally divided His audience, as a shepherd separates the sheep and goats, by saying, “*I told you that you would die in your sins, for unless you believe that I am he you will die in your sins.*”: either you believe and then you will live as if righteous, or you do not believe and then you will die in sin.

Sometimes, I do not think we pay quite as close of attention to things when we read John's Gospel as we should, because we often miss or forget about certain important things: bits of Scripture which are excellent proof-texts for our doctrines; like I have previously said concerning the resurrection of all humanity (both the wicked and righteous) to an everlasting existence back in John 5:25-30. Yet here we find clear Gospel agreement with the Apostle Paul (and Martin Luther's) understanding of salvation through faith alone.

John quotes Jesus as saying that “...*unless you believe that I am he you will die in your sins.*”. We (us and them; the 1<sup>st</sup> Century Jews) understand “salvation” and “eternal life” as the opposite of {*dying “in your sins.”*}. This means that, unless they believe: unless they have *pisteuo*; that Jesus is “HE”, they will die in their sins. But, as Jesus earlier explained to Nicodemus in John 3, a person can and will only have *pisteuo* if they are *anōthen*, “born again” by the gracious, monergistic work of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, Jesus {and John} affirms what Paul explained to the Ephesians, “*For by grace you have been saved through faith.*” (Eph. 2:8 ESV). However, in this discourse, the question remains: Faith in what or whom? Who is the 'He' that Jesus claims to be? These are the questions that prompt His hearers to ask Jesus, “*Who are you?*”, because they just could not understand.

So, “*Jesus said to them, “Just what I have been telling you from the beginning. 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.”*”. Although some might argue otherwise, Jesus was speaking plainly enough so that those with the Spirit-given “*ears to hear*” (Matt. 11:15 ESV; Ezekiel 40:4) could understand what He meant and also, so that those in the willing and glad service of the Devil could understand who He is.

- Previously, Jesus claimed to be the “*bread of life*” (Jn. 6:35 ESV), meaning the ultimate, divine source of our provision and earthly sustaining: God the LORD.
- Now Jesus was claiming to be the “*light of the world*” who gives the “*light of life*” (Jn. 8:12 ESV), meaning the ultimate, divine originating source of life and also the measure, guide, or rule for living wisely, justly, and with all righteousness.

- Before that, Jesus had demonstrated His power over creation by transforming water into wine and walking across the waters of Galilee, by healing a paralytic and a royal official's son with just a word of command {while also demonstrating His authority over the Sabbath and the Sabbath's requirement to do works of righteousness}, and by miraculously feeding and providing for a great multitude.

John has been detailing the abundance of evidence available for everyone to see and to help everyone know that Jesus is God the Son. Yet these people, despite being confronted with so much evidence, did not understand what the evidence meant. They did not understand what it meant about Jesus and they did not understand what it meant for them. Meanwhile, Jesus simply told them the thing that He had been telling them from the very beginning, that He had “*much to say to you*”: to speak as a prophet of God, and “*much to judge*”: as an elder or authoritative leader in Israel, being a divine representative like Moses, yet someone greater. Jesus told them that He came to bring and explain God's truth to the world; to proclaim before the fallen *kosmos*, a message of hope in grace and love, received by faith and trust in the LORD. Jesus told them that “...*unless you believe that I am he...*” unless you believe that Jesus is the LORD God, then “...*you will die in your sins.*”

What is obvious to us on this side of the cross: being regenerate, and having God's Holy Spirit dwelling within us; was not so obvious, understandable, or believable to them, as John explains. So, Jesus told them how they may surely know that what He says is true, that He is who He says that He is, and that He has the power, right, and authority to do everything that He was doing. He declared, “***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. 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.*”.

But we need to pause, remember, and consider what Jesus is really saying by this. Throughout John's Gospel, the Evangelist takes great care to identify and demonstrate the specific *kronos* moments of Jesus's ministry as he leads the narrative to the ultimate *kairos* moment. So, let us refresh and remind ourselves about John the Evangelist's timeline thus far:

- After the initial poetic prehistory prologue, the Evangelist begins his narrative with the ministry of John the Baptist, his denial of being the Christ himself, and the baptism of Jesus.
- Next, he describes Jesus calling His first disciples, specifically: Andrew, Simon Peter, Philip, and Nathanael (also known as Bartholomew).
- Then, he describes the events surround Jesus' first public, miraculous “Sign”, the wedding at Cana and His transformation of water into wine.
- After that, John mentions Jesus traveling to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover (Passover #1). While there, Jesus performed other signs, most notably by driving out the money-changers and sacrifice sellers from the Temple precincts. It was also during this trip to Jerusalem that Nicodemus came to visit Jesus.
- Next, when Jesus returned home to Galilee, He took an unconventional route, stopping at the town of Sychar (or Shechem) in Samaria on the way, where He publicly engaged with a Samaritan woman and led many Samaritans to believe in Him (John 4).
- Upon resuming His Galilean ministry, Jesus healed the son of a royal official as His second miraculous “Sign”.
- Then, some time after that, Jesus returned to Jerusalem for an unidentified “*feast of the Jews*” (possibly the Feast of Tabernacles), during which time He healed an invalid at Bethesda on the Sabbath (Sign #3).

- After this, Jesus returned to Galilee again and resumed His ministry. Some time “near” to the next Passover, but probably just after it (Passover #2), Jesus taught in the wilderness and fed a multitude with only “*five barley loaves and two fish*” (6:9) (Sign #4) before walking on the surface of the Sea (Sign #5). Jesus crossed the sea on His way to Capernaum, where He declared Himself to be the “*bread of life*” (I AM #1) in the local synagogue (6:35, 48), prompting many of His followers to desert Him.
- Meanwhile, Jesus remained in Galilee, intentionally avoiding the Jewish leadership in Jerusalem, until it was time for the Feast of Tabernacles (Tabernacles #2).
- During this feast, Jesus appeared in the Temple and began to teach: offering the people “*rivers of living water*” (7:38) while they divided themselves over differing opinions about who Jesus is. Jesus' ministry and teaching, in that time and in that place further upset and angered the Jewish leaders, prompting them to send the Temple officers to arrest Jesus; yet they refused to obey that order.
- Finally, ever after that point, the Evangelist portrays the Pharisees as working to “trap” Jesus, to silence Jesus, and to remove Jesus as a serious concern or threat to their authority. One such example is their bringing of the woman accused of adultery to Him for judgment.

John's narrative presents several important chronological and contextual details that we must remember.

- Although the Feast of Tabernacle's was instituted by God to remind Israel of their time spent dwelling in the wilderness, it was also a reminder and celebration of the LORD's choice to dwell in their midst with them; of His visible presence at the portable Tabernacle tent which was tended by the Levites.
- This same sense was in mind when the Evangelist wrote in his prologue, “*And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us ...*”(Jn. 1:14 ESV) because the word translated as “dwelt” {Greek: *skenoo*} literally evokes their nomadic, tent-dwelling {Hebrew: *mishkan*} life and the Mosaic Tabernacle, which is why people often paraphrase the verse as {*And the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us...*}.
- Lastly, according to the Evangelist, Jesus never returns home to Galilee after this Feast. Jesus remained in Judea, close to Jerusalem; as God the Son, dwelling within the midst of the Jewish “camp”. Jesus would remain there until His crucifixion.

This timeline is important because of how it echoes the early history of Israel.

- Just as the LORD performed many signs and wonders among both the Gentiles and Hebrews in Egypt, so Jesus performed many signs and wonders among the Gentiles and Jews in Galilee.
- Just as the LORD provided for the Hebrews by giving them manna from heaven, Jesus equated Himself to that manna as the “*bread of life*” and the “*bread from heaven*”.
- Just as the LORD showed His presence in fire and smoke upon the mountain, and the LORD commanded Moses that a golden lamp stand should be kept burning perpetually within the holy place of the Tabernacle as a sign of His presence, Jesus identified Himself with this symbol as the “*light of the world*”.
- Just as the LORD dwelt within the midst of His chosen people in the Tabernacle, at the heart of their camp, so Jesus came and dwelt in the midst of His people, in Judea, and near to Jerusalem.

- And finally, by the end of everything, just as Israel rejected the lordship and divine kingship of the LORD (1 Samuel 8:7) by begging Samuel to give them an earthly king (King Saul), the 1<sup>st</sup> Century Jews will reject the lordship of Christ and beg for Caesar instead (19:14-16).
  - “Now it was the day of Preparation of the Passover. It was about the sixth hour. He [Pilate] said to the Jews, “Behold your King!” They cried out, “Away with him, away with him, crucify him!” Pilate said to them, “Shall I crucify your King?” The chief priests answered, “**We have no king but Caesar.**” So he delivered him over to them to be crucified.” (Jn. 19:14-16 ESV)
- Again, John repeatedly shows us, “Timing is everything!”

So, keeping that timing context in mind, being soon after the Feast of Tabernacles (in late October), we hear Jesus declare a prophetic sign, so that the people would surely know the truth, “*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. 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 here plainly prophesies His death by crucifixion at the insistence of the Jews, about five or six months before the event occurs (with Passover usually being in late March or early April), publicly repeating the same prophesy He had told Nicodemus privately eighteen months earlier, “*And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, **so must the Son of Man be lifted up**, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.*” (Jn. 3:14-15 ESV). Jesus declared that His crucifixion and death will be a sign and will be the evidence that will prove, without a doubt, the truth of what He says:

- that the LORD is with Him;
- that He is a prophet of the LORD;
- that everything He does is done to please and glorify the LORD;
- that He is the Christ; He is the LORD.

But, His audience surely understood and expected a different meaning for “*lifted up*” than what Jesus intended: positively presuming and preferring to understand it as Jesus being elevated and glorified, almost certainly as a political messiah, which explains the consternation of “the Jews” and their rapid negative reaction to Jesus’ “triumphal” and “kingly” entry into Jerusalem (12:12-19). Unfortunately, both those for and against Him, would identify that still-future event as His fulfillment of this prophecy, rather than His crucifixion. Although the triumphal entry was not, as the glorification dimension would be fulfilled through His resurrection, ascension, and enthronement (WSC #28); it would still have been accepted as valid proof that Jesus actually was claiming to be the eschatological “Son of Man” and claiming to have been given “all authority” in Israel (Daniel 7:13-14).

Despite the fulfillment of that sign being still in Jesus’ future, Jesus’s claims were leaving no doubt in the minds of the Jews, becoming even more certain that Jesus believed Himself to be the LORD’s anointed {because He is}: believing that He is the Christ because, “*As he was saying these things, many believed in him.*”. Listening to Jesus and hearing His claims, many people were coming to believe in Him. They were beginning to have *pisteuo* in Him, just as others were beginning to better understand who Jesus knew Himself to be.

- Do you believe in Jesus as God the Son: the *Logos* who is *Theos* and *Andros*; or, do you believe that Jesus was merely a good man who simply thought He was God?
- Do you trust in Jesus as your only hope and confidence of standing justified before the LORD or, do you believe that Jesus was just a good (or even great) example for how a person might live a good life;

teaching us how to live well enough, doing enough good, so that we may be approved of by a gracious and forgiving God that will ignore our many failures?

- Do you belong to the world below or, to heaven above?
- Are you walking in the darkness of death or, are you living in the light of life?
- Is Jesus the light of your world, the one whom you trust and follow?
- Is Jesus the light of your world, does His Word illuminate and guide your life; does He direct you how to live?
- Is Jesus the light of your world, do you approach Him with fear and trembling, seeking forgiveness for your sin in the purify fire of His merciful love?

Considering those questions, I heard an interesting point be made recently. Have you ever noticed that other religions want to claim Jesus for themselves, while true Christians want and need nothing from other religions?

- Buddhists claim Jesus was an exemplary man who achieved enlightenment.
- Hindus claim that Jesus was an avatar of Vishnu.
- Muslims claim that Jesus was a virgin-born, miracle-working prophet, but not God.
- All of the many forms of secularists and moralists claim that Jesus was just a good teacher, but not God.

Therefore, every other religion implicitly admits, affirms, and agrees that Jesus truly is the “*light of the world*”. He must be, otherwise they would not want a single piece of Him. But, we Christians understand that, as the Evangelist wrote in his first letter, “...*that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.*” (1 Jn. 1:5-6 ESV). Jesus Christ needs and wants nothing from them because they “*belong to the world*”, just as everyone who clings to them, or tries to add anything to the holy purity of God's truth also belongs to the world.

Jesus is very clear. There are only two options. There is only us and them. There are only those who belong to the world and those who belong to Jesus Christ. There are only two peoples: those in Adam and those in Christ, those enslaved to sin and those freed to be righteous.

The Scriptures have been given to us so that we may know where and to whom we belong. Therefore, I urge you and implore you each to walk in His light and continue to forsake the darkness. Trust God; trust Jesus Christ. Believe and know that by your faith in Him, you shall not “*die in your sins*” but shall instead possess the “*light of life*” and one day follow Christ to where he has gone.

**AMEN**