

“If You Do Not Believe that I Am He, You will die in Your Sins”

John 8:21-30

John 8:21-30 – *“Then Jesus said to them again, “I am going away, and you will seek Me, and will die in your sin. Where I go you cannot come.”*

²² *So the Jews said, “Will He kill Himself, because He says, ‘Where I go you cannot come’?”*

²³ *And He said to them, “You are from beneath; 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 if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.”*

²⁵ *Then they said to Him, “Who are You?”*

And Jesus said to them, “Just what I have been saying to you from the beginning. ²⁶ I have many things to say and to judge concerning you, but He who sent Me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I heard from Him.”

²⁷ *They did not understand that He spoke to them of the Father.*

²⁸ *Then Jesus said to them, “When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and that I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father taught Me, I speak these things. ²⁹ And He who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him.” ³⁰ As He spoke these **words, many believed in Him.**”*

Background Notes

The setting for this section of John 8 was the Temple courts in Jerusalem, soon after the Feast of Tabernacles, and about six months before the crucifixion. The Lord had just declared that He is the Light of the world - one of the great “**I am**” statements in the Gospel of John. *“Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, “I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life”(v12).* The Pharisees rejected that statement and attempted (unsuccessfully) to refute it. They continued to refuse to acknowledge the Lord Jesus as their Messiah.

In John 8 the Lord continued to preach to the people who were gathered in the Temple courts, and to the self-righteous Pharisees as well. In verses 21-30, He continued to press home the truth that He had come from Heaven, and that He was going back to Heaven. He continued to stress that God was His Father, and that He and the Father were together. *“And He who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him” (v29).*

The Lord continued to make the claim that He was God. *“Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am **He**, you will die in your sins” (v24, emphasis added).* Notice that the word “He” is printed in italics in your Bibles. This means that the word “He” is not part of the original text, but was added by translators to make the sentence more understandable. The actual text reads: “If you do not believe that I am...” “**I AM**”! Jesus was claiming the divine name for God for Himself, right from the Old Testament! Remember that God revealed Himself to Moses at the burning bush as “**I AM.**” So the Lord Jesus was making a claim to deity. He was stating that He is God!

If you don't believe that "I AM," you will die in your sins. The same is true in verse 28: "*Then Jesus said to them, "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am [He], and that I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father taught Me, I speak these things."* There it is again – "**I AM**" - a claim to deity!

In the Gospel of John there are seven "I AM" statements **with** a predicate: "I am the Bread," "I am the Door," and so on. Also in the Gospel of John there are seven other "I AM" claims to deity - seven "I AM" statements **without** a predicate. Three of them are right here in John 8. We have just looked at two of them, in verses 24 and 28. (Remember, the word "He" in those verses was added by the translators for clarity in reading). And we will see the most well-known "I AM" statement in verse 58: "*Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM."* Clearly the Lord claimed to be **fully God!**

In verse 28, once again we catch a glimpse of our Lord's omniscience – an attribute of God alone - when He used the term "lift up": "*When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He."* He surely was referring to His coming crucifixion, and most likely He was also referring to His resurrection, ascension and exaltation. "*When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and that I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father taught Me, I speak these things."*

And the Lord was "lifted up." How would they recognize and know that He was God when He was lifted up? Think of the supernatural events that took place at the time of the Lord's crucifixion: the earthquake, the three hours of darkness, the ripping of the heavy veil in the Temple from top to bottom! At the cross, even the Roman centurion exclaimed, "**Truly this man was the Son of God!**" (Mark 15:39).

Doctrinal/ Teaching Points

1. There is no "second chance" for salvation.

In verse 21 the Lord said to the unbelieving Jews, "*I am going away, and you will seek Me, and will die in your sin. Where I go you cannot come."* After His resurrection and return to Heaven, these unbelieving Jews would not only be unable to find His body, but they would never find their Messiah. Thus they would die in their sin.

"*Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins."* Notice that the Lord did **not** say, "Well, after I'm gone you will get a second chance, because you didn't really understand me. When I said, "*Where I go you cannot come,*" you thought that I was talking about suicide (v22). And you didn't understand my claim to deity, even though I belabored that point from the beginning: "*Just what I have been saying to you from the beginning*" (v25). But because of your ignorance, and because of your misunderstanding, you'll get a second chance."

Did the Lord say that? **No way!** He said, unequivocally, "**You will die in your sin.**"

There is no “second chance” for salvation. Some people today think that they’ll get a second chance when they die - but that is not what the Bible teaches. Sin separates us from God, so to “die in your sin” means that you not only die physically, but you die in a state of eternal separation from God.

Notice that the problem is sin. **Sin** - both singular and plural. Verse 21 (singular): *“I am going away, and you will seek Me, and will die in your **sin**.”* And verse 24 (plural): *“Therefore I said to you that you will die in your **sins**; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your **sins**.”*

Sin refers to our sinful nature – indwelling sin. **Sins** refers to the fruit of that nature – the evil, sinful deeds we do. Apart from Christ and salvation, a person will be eternally separated from God because of **sin**, **and** because of **sins**. Hebrews 9:27 says, *“And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment.”* There is no second chance for salvation.

2. There is no “second way” of salvation.

Look again what the Lord said in verse 24: *“Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.”*

The Lord was telling them that if they didn’t believe that He is God, the God of the Old Testament, and the promised Messiah, they would die in their sins. There was – and is - no “second way” for salvation. God was the only one that could redeem them, and Jesus is God. There is **no other way**! God’s way of salvation is through the Messiah, and Jesus was - and is - the Messiah.

From the very beginning Jesus had claimed to be God, and claimed to be the Messiah. That’s what He was saying in verse 25 when they said to Him, *“Who are You?”* And Jesus said to them, *“Just what I have been saying to you from the beginning.”* He had told them right from the beginning - but they would not believe! Therefore, they would die in their sins. There is no “second way” for salvation.

I’m sure you’ve heard unbelievers say, “All roads lead up the same mountain,” meaning “All religions lead to the same God.” That is **not** what the Bible teaches. All roads do **not** lead up the same mountain! There is only **one** road that leads up to God the Father, and that is Jesus Christ. All other roads lead down to destruction. Those downward roads may be pleasant roads. They may be scenic roads. They may be well-traveled roads. But - they don’t lead up to God! There is no “other way” of salvation.

Practical Applications

1. Don’t miss your “window of opportunity.”

I'm sure you have heard that expression: Don't miss your "window of opportunity." It's used all the time. It comes from the NASA space program, and it refers to the necessity to launch when orbits and positions are just right to accomplish the purpose of the mission. If you "miss the window," the opportunity is lost.

"Don't miss your window of opportunity" is also true in reference to becoming a Christian - to receiving salvation. If you're not a Christian, don't miss your window of opportunity! Right now, according to God's Word in John 8, if you're an unbeliever, you can't go to Heaven. You will die in your sin. *"Then Jesus said to them again, "I am going away, and you will seek Me, and will die in your sin. Where I go you cannot come" (v21). "And He said to them, "You are from beneath; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world" (v23).* If you miss your "window of opportunity" for receiving Christ, you will die in your sins. Once again - *"Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins."*

Unbelievers die in their sins, but believers die in the Lord! *"Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord..." (Revelation 14:13.)* Believers die in the Lord, but *un*believers die in their sins. I urge you to receive Christ as your Savior! If you are not a Christian, **now** is your window of opportunity. Don't die in your sins. Don't miss your window of opportunity!

2. Don't "unload" everything at once on the unbeliever!

"I have many things to say and to judge concerning you, but He who sent Me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I heard from Him"(v26).

The Lord could have presented His listeners with much more truth. He could have come down on them much harder, but He was sensitive to the direction and the timing of His heavenly Father.

We, too, need to be sensitive to our listeners, and not unload every biblical truth at once on the unbeliever. Let's say you're beginning to build a relationship with a new neighbor who is not a Christian, or someone at work who is not a believer. Don't feel you have to "unload" everything on them at once! The Lord didn't, did He? Don't feel that you have to unload every single doctrine (such as the doctrine of hell or the doctrine of election) all at once on the unbeliever! That wouldn't be wrong, because these doctrines are true, but it wouldn't be wise!

I think that we need to follow the example of our Lord. The Lord was sensitive to the direction and timing from His Father. We, too, need to be sensitive to God's direction and timing as we present biblical truths to unbelievers. Don't unload everything at once on the unbeliever!