

John 8:21-49

The early morning pilgrimage to the temple
had been well worth it.

As they had hoped, Jesus was sitting in the
treasury, quietly waiting for them.

I'm sure His message was just what they
needed, and it was for their ears only,
a unique treasure, and one they would
never forget.

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But then, everything changed, and not for
the better.

The scribes and Pharisees, who cared nothing
for Jesus' message, rudely interjected
their own agenda. ---"**Master, this
woman was taken in adultery, in the
very act.**"

For a few awful moments, they thought they would be witnessing a public execution, and would be even expected to participate.

Instead, they witnessed full forgiveness and the complete reinstatement of this frightened woman.

Everyone breathed a sigh of relief, and Jesus continued His lesson --- **"I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."**

"Thou bearest record of thyself; thy record is not true" --- came an angry challenge from the back of the crowd. Once again, it was the Pharisees, and when Jesus supplied them with two witnesses

to back up His statements, they rejected them.

As far as they were concerned, Joseph was His father, and since he was deceased, he didn't count.

From this point on, things got really intense.

In fact, if I had to give a title for today's lesson, I would call it *Straight Talk*.

V 21 **"Then said Jesus again unto them, I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins: whither I go, ye cannot come."**

Only yesterday, Jesus had said much the same thing, but this time He added some very ominous words **"--- ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins."**

These were not the words of a loving
Saviour.

The previous day, He had spoken to the
people in compassion and love --- **"If
any man thirst, let him come unto me,
and drink."**

But there was no **"come unto me"** for these
men; rather, **"ye cannot come."**

Isaiah had pointed out the danger of
procrastination. **"Seek ye the LORD
while he may be found, call ye upon him
while he is near."**

However, the problem with these men wasn't
procrastination.

No, it wasn't inaction. They had made a
deliberate choice.

They had shut their ears, and closed their
eyes to the truth.

And by this time, willing ignorance had been
turned into judicial blindness.

As the old hymn writer has written ---

*There is a line by man unseen
That crosses every path;
The hidden boundary line between
God's mercy and His wrath.*

**"--- ye shall seek me, and shall die in your
sins: whither I go, ye cannot come."**

Yes, those were serious words, but they only
mocked Him.

V 22 **"--- Will he kill himself? because he
saith, Whither I go, ye cannot come."**

*What's He talking about, is He going to
commit suicide?*

And then Jesus laid it on the line.

V 23-24 **"--- Ye are from beneath; I am from
above: ye are of this world; I am not
of this world.**

24: I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins."

This was the third time that Jesus warned them --- **"ye shall die in your sins."** It was high time they stopped laughing and started listening.

And not only had He told them they would die in their sins, He told them why. "--- **if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins."**

However, they still had a chance, for He was still using the word **"if."**

But the point I want to make here is this. Even though our sins are the root cause of God's condemnation, they in themselves will not keep us out of heaven.

As we noted in a previous lesson, there are as many sinners in heaven as there are in hell.

No, our sins will not prevent us from entering the pearly gates, but our rejection of the Lamb of God will ---
"for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins."

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V 25 **"Then said they unto him, Who art thou?"**

Have you ever noticed when government or big business wants to delay action on a particular problem, they reserved it for further study?

That's what these men were doing.

They didn't need more information. They needed to act on the information they already had.

That's why Jesus said, "**Even the same that I said unto you from the beginning.**"

No, Jesus had never been backward in supplying information about His identity.

Actually, that's the chief reason they hated Him.

He had publicly proclaimed the fact that He was "**the bread of life**" and "**the light of the world.**"

And when they accused Him of making Himself equal with God, He readily agreed.

In fact, He had totally infuriated them by claiming powers that could only belong to God.

Remember what He said in John 5:21-23: "**For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will.**"

22: For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son:

23: That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him."

And that was only the beginning.

He went on to give them other examples of His equality with God, and even supplied four witnesses to back up His statements.

No, the last thing in the world they needed was more information.

And Jesus didn't give them any more.

He simply said, **"Even the same that I said unto you from the beginning."**

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And speaking of "**the beginning,**" one of Jesus' four witnesses had been actively involved in giving out information from the beginning of creation.

Yes, from the very moment our first parents sinned, God's Word began to talk about a Redeemer --- "**And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.**"

And the coats of skins that God had provided to cover their nakedness pointed to the fact that "**without shedding of blood is no remission.**"

Yes, God's Word has always pointed the way to the Son of God, and Jesus had personally told these men where to look.

John 5:39 **"Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me."**

No, they didn't need more information. They needed a change of heart --- **"And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life."**

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Returning to John 8:26-27 **"I have many things to say and to judge of you: but he that sent me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of him.**

27: They understood not that he spake to them of the Father."

Some day, Jesus will be the Judge of all the earth, and when that time comes, there will be **"many things to say and to judge"** concerning these men.

However, this was neither the time nor the place to deal with such matters.

Their case would be heard when they stood before Him at the Great White Throne Judgment.

For now, I must **"speak to the world those things which I have heard of him."**

He had walked all the way back from the Mount of Olives in order to fulfill that commission, and had been repeatedly hampered by their interruptions.

There would be time enough to judge them at a later date.

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V 28-30 **"Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father**

hath taught me, I speak these things.

29: And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him.

30: As he spake these words, many believed on him."

From the context, it would appear that Jesus was addressing the Pharisees.

However, there were others standing within the sound of His voice.

Certainly, His class would still be there, and I'm sure His words were having a profound effect on them.

And no doubt the sudden introduction of the woman taken in adultery, and the dispute that followed, would have attracted a crowd of curious onlookers.

So, when V 30 says, "**many believed on him,**"
it's quite probable that they came from
all of these groups.

Let's take another look at these words which
had so profoundly affected them.

V 28-29 "--- **When ye have lifted up the Son
of man, then shall ye know that I am
he, and that I do nothing of myself;
but as my Father hath taught me, I
speak these things.**

**29: And he that sent me is with me: the
Father hath not left me alone; for I do
always those things that please him."**

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As we all know, when Jesus' public ministry
came to a sudden end, and He had taught
His last lesson, there would still be
much work to be done.

Somehow, in spite of the testimony of John the Baptist, Jesus' own mighty works, the witness of the His Heavenly Father, and testimony of the scriptures, there would still be multitudes left unconvinced. Unthinkable, but true.

Of course, the opposition of the religious leaders had greatly contributed to their reluctance "--- **woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.**"

However, as Jesus indicated here in V 28, there would be a fifth witness "--- **When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he**".

Yes, His crucifixion and the events that followed it would have a powerful effect on the people.

Just as the brazen serpent had been lifted up in the wilderness and had brought life to many, so Jesus' crucifixion would sweep many into the fold.

Ironically, that final blow, that His enemies hoped would obliterate His memory for ever, would be the very thing that would manifest His glory.

John 12:31-32 **"Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out.**

32: And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."

Yes, what His teachings and miracles had not yet accomplished, His crucifixion would.

Think of that hardened centurion, who, when he **"saw the earthquake, and those things that were done,"** confessed, **"Truly this was the Son of God."**

Think of the effect on the dwellers in Jerusalem when **"the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent;**

52: And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose,

53: And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many."

Yes, this tremendous outpouring of God's power would be enough to soften the hearts of many, and provide a harvest just ripe for the picking.

Oh, there's no doubt that the healing of the lame man at the temple had stirred the hearts of many.

And there's no doubt that Peter preached in great power. But no amount of eloquence on his part, could account for the tremendous harvest that literally fell into his hands.

Acts 4:4 **"Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand."**

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And I wonder what effect this fifth witness had on those unbelieving Pharisees?

As the years went by, and they looked in vain for their Messiah, would they ever considered the possibility that they might have **"killed the Prince of life?"**

Oh yes, this fifth witness was very effective, and would continue to be.

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John 8:30 **"As he spake these words, many believed on him."**

No doubt Jesus' words had called forth believers from His early morning class, the curious onlookers, and even one or two of those stubborn Pharisees.

However, their response makes one wonder what they actually believed.

V 31-32 **"Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; 32: And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."**

That was an interesting statement, wasn't it? --- **"If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed."**

Certainly, salvation is by faith and by
faith alone.

However, if we want to be Jesus' disciples
rather than perpetual babes in Christ,
we must continue in His word.

Yes, we must obey Christ's commands.

Of course, Satan doesn't want Christian
disciples, or even Christians at all,
so he has always spread the lie that
obedience to Christ brings bondage.

Nothing could be further from the truth ---

**"If ye continue in my word, then are ye
my disciples indeed;**

**32: And ye shall know the truth, and
the truth shall make you free."**

Once again, Jesus was misunderstood.

V 33 **"They answered him, We be Abraham's
seed, and were never in bondage to any**

man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?"

Jesus wasn't talking about national freedom. He was talking about spiritual freedom, but they immediately took offence.

It was that old genealogy thing again.

They were **"Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man."**

What a denial of the facts!

They were presently in bondage to the Romans, and their history was one long record of disobedience and bondage.

If it weren't so pathetic, their statement would have been almost comical.

Undeterred by this prickly response, Jesus carefully explains the other side of the coin, that is, spiritual bondage.

V 34-36 **"--- Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant**

of sin.

35: And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever.

36: If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."

Yes, obedience to Christ's commands brings freedom, not bondage.

Let me illustrate my point.

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Some years ago, our family owned a little Shetland Sheepdog by the name of Heidi. Our eldest son, John (who has always loved animals) undertook the job of training her.

As it turned out, she was a quick learner, and a very obedient dog.

I guess you could say, she was a little more obedient than her master.

John knew that the city bylaw required all dogs to be kept on a leash when in public, but he just couldn't do it.

And he got away with it, because Heidi was so obedient.

That was one of Heidi's good qualities, but she had a problem.

She never understood how dangerous traffic was.

However, because of her obedience, that was never a real problem.

When they went for a walk and needed to cross the street, Heidi would stop and look up at John.

No, she never looked for cars, she looked at John.

When everything was clear, John would move his hand and say "OK."

That was the signal she was waiting for.

She would bound across the street, looking
neither to the left or to the right.

When John went into a store, where, of
course, dogs weren't allowed, he would
simply say "Stay," and Heidi would sit
outside. She might fidget a bit, and
look through the door, but she stayed.

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None of this is possible in the life of a
disobedient dog.

Whether the law required it or not, they
must be kept on a leash.

They can't run, as all dogs simply love to
do.

All they can do is pull at the leash, and
make life miserable for themselves and,
of course, for their master.

The man wants to walk, and the dog wants to run, but, unfortunately, they're bound together.

And then there's that whole thing about investigation.

Dogs want to stop and sniff, but their masters want to keep going.

Two different gears and two different interests, and the whole thing becomes a tug of war.

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Heidi had no idea there were problems like that.

As long as she kept her eye on John, she was free to run ahead, or lag behind and investigate.

Her master could enjoy his walk, and Heidi could enjoy her run.

Now I ask you, which of these dogs was free?

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V 36-37 "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

37: I know that ye are Abraham's seed; but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you."

Certainly this part of Jesus' message would have been directed squarely at the Pharisees.

They were Abraham's seed, but so was the rich man, who was in hell --- "**Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus.**"

Yes, they were Abraham's seed, but they weren't God's children.

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Jesus had always maintained that God was His Father. However, they had refused to believe Him.

Well, Jesus didn't accept their genealogy either.

V 38-44 "I speak that which I have seen with my Father: and ye do that which ye have seen with your father.

39: They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham.

40: But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham.

41: Ye do the deeds of your father. Then said they to him, We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God.

42: Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I

proceeded forth and came from God;
neither came I of myself, but he sent
me.

43: Why do ye not understand my speech?
even because ye cannot hear my word.

44: Ye are of your father the devil,
and the lusts of your father ye will
do. He was a murderer from the
beginning, and abode not in the truth,
because there is no truth in him. When
he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his
own: for he is a liar, and the father
of it."

Yes, Jesus was speaking plainly now, and He
was clearly setting down the lines of
demarcation.

Ever since the days of Adam and Eve, and
even before, there has been a struggle

between light and darkness, and so it was here.

V 38 **"I speak that which I have seen with my Father: and ye do that which ye have seen with your father."**

Yes, there are two sides and two fathers. And as we all know, children often bear a family resemblance.

Sometimes the way they look and the way they act is almost uncanny.

And that's not only true of the human family.

We are told in scripture, that Jesus is **"the express image"** of His Heavenly Father.

And do you remember what He said to Philip? ---**"he that hath seen me hath seen the Father"**.

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Well, the Pharisees claimed they were the sons of Abraham, but they didn't bear the family resemblance.

Abraham believed God, and they didn't.

Abraham followed God, and they fought against Him.

Yes, **"God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son,"** and they were doing their best to get rid of Him.

No, they bore the image of a different father.

V 44-47 **"Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.**

**45: And because I tell you the truth,
ye believe me not.**

**46: Which of you convinceth me of sin?
And if I say the truth, why do ye not
believe me?**

**47: He that is of God heareth God's
words: ye therefore hear them not,
because ye are not of God."**

Lies, hatred of the truth, and murder. Yes,
they manifested all the characteristics
of *their* father.

And their only defence was to hurl insults.

V 48 **"--- Say we not well that thou art a
Samaritan, and hast a devil?"**

Just like the crowd in Chapter 7, they said
He was demon possessed.

Jesus lost no time in rejecting that remark!

V 49 **"--- I have not a devil; but I honour
my Father, and ye do dishonour me."**

However, His reaction to being called a Samaritan was quite different.

Certainly, there was never any doubt that He was a full-blooded Israelite.

This thing about being a Samaritan was nothing more than a racial slur.

You see, the Samaritans were a despised nation, because they were only half-breed Jews.

So, when a proud son of Abraham wanted to insult somebody, he called him a Samaritan.

However, Jesus, who had vehemently denied any connection with Satan's kingdom, didn't seem to be insulted.

The fact is, He had spent two of the best days of His public ministry among these despised people.

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Yes, it was a time for plain speaking, and as we will find out next week, this confrontation would soon escalate into violence.