**The Gospel of John:**

**The awful end of unbelief**

*John 8:21-30*

**Context**

Throughout Jesus earthly ministry, He repeatedly dealt with a hostile and unbelieving people. “He came to his own, and those who were His own did not receive Him” (John 1:11).

The consequence of their unbelief put them in a position where they would die in their sins. In our text this morning, Jesus said three times to people who believed they were the representatives of God, “You will die in your sins.”  There are four ways in this passage that provide a clear way to be sure one dies in their sin. WARNING: the outcome is eternal!

**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.

4 ways to be sure and die in your sins

1. **To trust in yourself, v22**
2. The Audience: The Jews
3. Will He kill Himself?  
   1. The serious nature of the issue seems to be a joke to them
   2. Irony: those who are seeking to kill Him make such a claim
   3. Suicide in the Jewish faith was detestable. The worst place in hell is reserved for those who commit such a heinous act “are received by the darkest place in Hades”[[1]](#footnote-1)

**John 10:17-18**—*For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again.****18****No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father.”*

**Acts 2:23**—…*this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death.*

1. Self-righteousness is a deadly deception  
     
   **Isaiah 64:6**—*For all of us have become like one who is unclean, And all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment; And all of us wither like a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.*

**Psalm 14:2-3**—*The Lord has looked down from heaven upon the sons of men To see if there are any who understand, Who seek after God.* ***3****They have all turned aside, together they have become corrupt; There is no one who does good, not even one.*

**Proverbs 16:2**—*All the ways of a man are clean in his own sight, But the LORD weighs the motives.*

**Proverbs 20:9**—*Who can say, “I have cleansed my heart, I am pure from my sin”?*

**Matthew 5:20**—*For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.*

1. Utterly contrary to genuine salvation

**Romans 10:3**—*For not knowing about God’s righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God.*

**Romans 3:20**—*because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin.*

**James 2:10**—*For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all.*

**2 Corinthians 5:21**—*He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*

**Philippians 3:9**—…*and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith.*

1. The scribes and Pharisees were at the top of self-righteous thinking based on their own achievements
2. People who trust in themselves will never see heaven
3. **To be worldly, v23**
4. You are from below; you are from this world  
   1. **Kosmos** (World)—the invisible spiritual system of evil that opposes the kingdom of God.[[2]](#footnote-2)

**2 Corinthians 10:5**—*We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ*

**John 12:31**—*Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out.*

**John 14:30**—*I will not speak much more with you, for the ruler of the world is coming, and he has nothing in Me*

**1 John 3:1**—*See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.*

* 1. Summed up in 3 ways:

**1 John 2:16**—*For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.* 

* 1. Lust of the flesh
  2. The lust of the eyes
  3. Boastful pride of life
  4. All controlled by the devil

**John 8:44**—*You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies.*

**Ephesians 2:2**—…*in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.*

**James 4:4**—*You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world [“*affection for” or “love for”*] is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.* [Notes mine]

**1 John 2:15**—*Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.*

* 1. To be “worldly-minded” is to be “devoid of the Spirit”  
       
     **Jude 19**—*These are the ones who cause divisions, worldly-minded, devoid of the Spirit.*

1. I am from above; not of this world (system)  
   1. He came down “from above” (**3:11-13; 5:36-37; 6:33, 38, 50-51**, et. al)
   2. True believers are no longer part of the world system  
        
      **Colossians 1:13**—*For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son*

**1 John 4:5-6**—*They are from the world; therefore they speak as from the world, and the world listens to them.****6****We are from God; he who knows God listens to us; he who is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.*

**John 15:19**—*If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you.*  
**John 17:14, 16**---*I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world… They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.*

1. **To be unwilling to believe, v24**
2. Beyond trusting in self (I) and worldliness (II), unbelief is the root of the issue
3. The consequence of unbelief is to “*die in your sins*”
4. Unless you believe that “*I AM*” (He does not appear in the original Greek)  
   1. Claim of Deity

**Exodus 3:14**—*God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM”; and He said, “Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’”* 

* 1. Tetragrammaton (YHWH, often transliterated as Yahweh; so sacred the Jews refused to pronounce it)

1. Since salvation comes only through faith in Christ alone, those who persist in unbelief will forever be separated from God in eternal damnation
2. **To be hard-hearted, vv25-30**
3. *Who are you?* (AKA, Who do you think you are making such a statement that we will die in our sins?)  
   1. Amazing question in light of all the signs Jesus had performed

**John 5:36**—*But the testimony which I have is greater than the testimony of John; for the works which the Father has given Me to accomplish—the very works that I do—testify about Me, that the Father has sent Me.*

* 1. He had repeatedly told them who He was (**5:17; 6:35; 7:28-38; 8:12**)
  2. I’ve told you *from the beginning* of His ministry.
  3. *Many things to speak and to judge concerning* them.
     1. He had provided them with ample evidence
     2. Their rejection was inexcusable

1. He spoke exactly what the Father told Him to speak
2. They could not see it, but will when He is lifted up (crucifixion)
3. The Father will raise the Son to validate the Son and His message

**Hebrews 7:26**—*For it was fitting for us to have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens* 

1. As He spoke these things, many came to believe in Him—at least outwardly

**Conclusion**

People will make the awful choice of refusing the only provision for their souls gifted exclusively through the person and work of Christ. Some of those that rejected Christ here will later realize that they had grossly miscalculated and would come to put their faith in Him. God used Peter’s preaching on the day of Pentecost to save 3,000 Jews alone. Our responsibility is to communicate gospel truth to all and trust the Holy Spirit to do His work.

**Matthew 28:19-20**—*Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,****20****teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”*

**Matthew 16:18**—*I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.*

1. *The Wars of the Jews*, Josephus, iii.viii.5 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary*, John MacArthur, John 1-11, p. 347 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)