

The Gospel of John

Lesson #75
The Journey
Jim Hoffman

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The Gospel of John

Consider the hard-hearted Jew for a moment. In particular the members of the Sanhedrin of Jesus' day. Messiah is standing in front of them. He is doing miracles in their presence. He is speaking truth to them. Yet, for want of their own will they are determined to remain resistant to all they see and hear. The Holy Spirit will bear witness to them, but they will not be moved to believe that this Jesus can be Messiah. Their minds are made up and their hearts are hardened. Consequently, for the last 2,000 years they have existed with the awareness of what eternity could be like for them now. Instead, every moment is one of pain, darkness, loneliness, and regret knowing their fate is one of their own choosing, and one that will never change.

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The Hard-hearted Jew

Isaiah 6:8 And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Then I said, "Here I am! Send me." 9 And he said, "Go, and say to this people: "'Keep on hearing, but do not understand; keep on seeing, but do not perceive.' 10 Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and blind their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed." Then I said, "How long, O Lord?" 11 And he said: "Until cities lie waste without inhabitant, and houses without people, and the land is a desolate waste, 12 and the Lord removes people far away, and the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land." 3

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- John 8:19 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."
- It is not obvious here, but the Jews are no doubt calling into question the legitimacy of his birth by asking "where is your Father?".
- When we get to verse #41 in this chapter, they will openly call into evidence all the rumors about Jesus' birth, but for now they will not be so obvious.

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The Gospel of John

- When they ask, "Where is your Father?" they are not asking an honest question for they would not believe him if he told them – in fact, he already has.
- Jesus goes on to tell them they cannot know his father without knowing himself – to know one is to know the other and to not know one is to not know the other.
- John 14:6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (one more not so subtle claim to being Messiah)

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- John 8:20 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.
- His adversaries tried to arrest him in chapter 7 (just a day ago) – here in chapter 8 he is speaking hard truth to his foes again and, again, no one arrests him or even tries.
- We are told the reason – "because his hour had not yet come" – even the crowd doesn't want Jesus to be arrested because the Jews want to kill him, but in time the crowds will change.

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Think deeply about this question and then answer it to yourself - We know from reading scripture that Jesus' arrest will lead to his torture, humiliation, and death, but would we really want his arrest to have never happened?

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The Gospel of John

- If he is never arrested, there will be no trial. Without a trial there will be no scourging. Without a scourging there will be no crown of thorns jammed into his head. Without a crown of thorns there will be no cross to carry on his shoulders. Without a cross there will be no nails. Without the nails there will be no humiliation when he hangs naked in public. Without hanging naked in public there will be no death. Without his death there will be no burial. Without his burial there will be no resurrection.
- Ecclesiastes 3:11 "He has made everything beautiful in its time" – as we read scripture it becomes obvious that time is a critical element in the movements of God in history.

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In a sense, we have all been "on the clock" since birth. As our lives unfolded, we grew up, perhaps found a mate (perhaps not), we found a way to support ourselves, we found friends, and we found our way to where we are today. As we look back, we can see the hand of God going before us removing barriers, answering prayers, and being involved in our lives in all sorts of ways. Today, we are still "on the clock" awaiting the next events in our lives. We don't want our "arrest" to happen because of where it leads, yet we know it must happen or our future cannot happen. It is a test of our faith to eagerly await the future events of our lives that will open the doors to the best things for us. Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning.

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Joni Eareckson Tada

“I remember the time when my friend Charlie, who has cerebral palsy, asked me a tough question. Looking down at his twisted arms and legs in his wheelchair, he said, “What possible purpose could there be in my suffering?” I told Charlie his question couldn’t be answered in a single conversation—or even in a book. That’s because God’s answers and purposes have to be lived out in order to understand them. And that takes time and trust. Ecclesiastes 3 tells us that there is a time for everything—and that includes understanding. If you have questions about suffering, or about why things have happened as they have, remember these two words: time and trust. Keep trusting in God, friend. Believe his promises. Act on his Word. Live out your faith. And in time, or perhaps beyond time, you will understand the heart of God in every one of your hardships.”

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The Gospel of John

• John 8:21 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.” 22 So the Jews said, “Will he kill himself, since he says, ‘Where I am going, you cannot come?’” 23 He said to them, “You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. 24 I told you that you would die in your sins, for unless you believe that I am he (Messiah) you will die in your sins.”

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The Gospel of John

- Three times in (4) verses Jesus tells his adversaries they will die in their sins.
- When you see repetition in the bible, you should always pay attention because it probably has great importance.
- This would be like the difference between telling a small child to be careful not to trip over their toys and telling them to look both ways when crossing the street – so as a parent you would probably repeat that “street warning” more than a few times.

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The Gospel of John

- In verse #21 his pronouncement sounds like a prophecy – you will die in your sins.
- However, when we get to verse #24 his words sound more like a warning – “unless you believe that I am he you will die in your sins”.
- Whether it’s a prophecy, a warning, or both as for the effect on humans it is as critical as you can get – life and death, heaven and hell, hang in the balance. 13

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It seems to me the critical question is what does it mean to die in your sins? For many this has been an academic question, and for some it is no more than a hypothetical one. After all, we’ve never spoken to one who died in their sins. And yet we, and all who draw breath, know Jesus’ words are true – and so undeniably true that the lost almost universally do not want to hear about dying, let alone dying in their sin. This is because it is the truth that rings so true it is terrifying to the lost and sobering to the believer. It is the truth that cannot be silenced and will not go away. Indeed, it is the truth that must be dealt with if one is ever to have peace. Jesus repeats the warning as though hearing it one more time could make a difference, and sometimes it does.

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- Some perspective for us – John is writing of things that would cause one to believe Jesus is the Christ.
- And Jesus is doing so many things that prove his identity that John tells us in chapter 21 that if all he did were recorded, the world could not contain the books.
- If we look only at what John recorded there is a mountain of evidence for Jesus’ claims – when we consider all that was seen day to day, there is no excuse for unbelief. 15

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The Gospel of John

- In the exchanges Jesus had with his opponents, we see no claims like, “you can’t do miracles” – that would have been so obviously wrong the crowd would laugh at them.
- They didn’t even try to dispute the evidence for his being Messiah – the evidence was so vast and so undeniable they never went there.
- So why the opposition? Because they had no interest in God or his Messiah – as it turns out, those who claimed to speak for God did not know him or want him.

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- We all have friends, relatives, and neighbors who will never be saved – and it’s not because they can’t be saved, it’s because they won’t be saved.
- We stand back in utter shock that they’ve heard the gospel over and over and are unchanged.
- Because we are saved, we find it nearly impossible to believe that some have no interest in our God and his plan to save them – and so, they remain unmoved.

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- I swear there must be some mystical switch within us that needs to be switched to the “I am open to the claims of God” mode.
- How else do we explain the different conclusions to the same evidence that is hidden in plain sight?
- Let us consider the mountains of evidence the “Jews” of Jesus day had to ignore to miss what ought to have been plain to them.

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- Jesus' ministry lasted roughly 42 months which, on the Jewish calendar would have been 1,260 days.
- Let's be real conservative and say that Jesus averaged just 20 miracles per day – that would be 25,200 signs of his Messiahship.
- Then let's consider that none of his miracles were openly contested – yet the vast majority remained in darkness because they loved their sin and didn't want him.

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Questions?

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