

Many Will Believe In Him

John 8:19-30

Have you ever noticed that our culture seems to be filled with skeptics—people who do not believe in anything, perhaps other than that there is nothing to believe in? Anxiety is the number one psychiatric diagnosis in our country. At the root of anxiety is a lack of a sense of security. There is nothing these people can really believe in, so they feel anxious about everything and feel they cannot lean on or trust in anything. People may take Xanax or Valium, or get drunk, to cover up that sense of uncertainty. Yet deep inside, each person has a desire and a need to believe in something. To try to meet that need many individuals pick out some strange things to believe in: a rock group, the stock market, offbeat ideas, government programs, all the time passing up the real Source of security. People in Christ's time struggled with this skepticism too as we will see today.

With that thought in mind let us continue our study in John chapter 8. We will begin at verse 12 just to get a little background and then pick up our study where we left off last time at verse 19.

John 8:12-18 NLT:

12 Jesus spoke to the people once more and said, "I am the light of the world. If you follow me, you won't have to walk in darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life." 13 The Pharisees replied, "You are making those claims about yourself! Such testimony is not valid." 14 Jesus told them, "These claims are valid even though I make them about myself. For I know where I came from and where I am going, but you don't know this about me. 15 You judge me by human standards, but I do not judge anyone. 16 And if I did, my judgment would be correct in every respect because I am not alone. The Father who sent me is with me. 17 Your own law says that if two people agree about something, their witness is accepted as fact. 18 I am one witness, and my Father who sent me is the other."

John 8:19-22 NAS:

19 So they were saying to Him, "Where is Your Father?" Jesus answered, "You know neither Me nor My Father; if you knew Me, you would know My Father also."
20 These words He spoke in the treasury, as He taught in the temple; and no one seized Him, because His hour had not yet come.
21 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?’”

Can it be that in all this time that Jesus has been teaching in various parts of the region, these Pharisees did not understand that Jesus was referring to God when He spoke of His Father? Apparently that is exactly the situation because they were looking around for His earthly father, asking Jesus if His father was somewhere in the crowd where He could be asked to verify what Jesus is saying. It seems obvious based on their ignorance of what Jesus is saying that they not only refused to accept what He was teaching but that they could not have known nor understood God either. They had developed their own religion by creating their own laws and rituals whereby they no longer had a true knowledge of God from their own Old Testament writings. If they had known the true God they would have recognized the revelation of God in the person of Jesus.

John 1:14,18 NLT:

14 So the Word became human and made his home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father’s one and only Son.

18 No one has ever seen God. But the one and only Son is himself God and is near to the Father’s heart. He has revealed God to us.

John 14:7-9 NLT:

7 If you had really known me, you would know who my Father is. From now on, you do know him and have seen him!”

8 Philip said, “Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.”

9 Jesus replied, “Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and yet you still don’t know who I am? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father! So why are you asking me to show him to you?”

No one seized Jesus even though He continued teaching that He was God and had been sent by God to teach the will of God and reveal God to the world. No one seized Him simply because, as John repeatedly pointed out, Jesus was working on God’s time schedule to accomplish His Father’s will. Nothing would happen to Jesus until God’s prescribed time for His crucifixion arrived.¹ You see, nothing could have happened to Jesus during the entire time of His ministry on earth because God can control everything. He can control people. He can control the weather. He can control nature, and everything else as well.

This is good to remember if we ever become concerned with the danger involved in serving God. Many people worry about what will happen to them in various situations. Some even worry about what will happen to them if the Tribulation begins while they are still alive. Do not worry about such things because God will protect all believers in such situations. They may experience suffering, trials, and even death, but God will make certain that you never suffer more than you can bear. We can say with confidence, “My

¹ John 2:4; 7:6, 30; 12:23, 27; 13:1; 17:1.

time is in the hands of God alone, and what better place for it to be.” And better in His hands than in our own. Jesus’ hour had not yet come, because his work was not done. To all God’s purposes there is a time.

But Jesus knew that there was not much time left before His time to be crucified would come, so He wanted these Pharisees to understand that their opportunity to trust and believe in Him and His message was short. He would soon be going back to His Father and they could not follow Him there. Do you remember what Jesus said back in John 7:33-34?

33 “I will be with you only a little longer. Then I will return to the one who sent me.

34 You will search for me but not find me. And you cannot go where I am going.”

When Jesus tells them in John 8:21 that they will die in their sin, He is predicting His crucifixion. If they reject Him and do not believe His message, they cannot be saved and will die in their sins. Just as today if you refuse to believe in Jesus and then die, there is no hope for you. They will have had the opportunity for salvation, but will have rejected it. Their eternity would therefore be spent in Hell. In John 16:9 (NLT), Jesus says: *“The world’s sin is that it refuses to believe in me.”* They would “die” because they continued living with their own sin, remaining under its power. Their physical death would be the beginning of eternal separation from God.

Without this faith in Jesus we cannot be saved from the power of sin and therefore will continue in that state to the last. Nothing but God’s grace through our faith in Christ’s atoning death will provide the power necessary to forgive our sins and give us the Holy Spirit who will ensure our entrance into Heaven totally cleansed of all sin forever. Such a gift is given only to those who believe in Christ. Without such faith we will *die in our sins.* **Unbelief is the damning sin;** it is a sin against the solution offered in love and grace by God. Believers die in Christ and are therefore saved from dying *in their sins.*

“Will he kill himself?” It is difficult to know whether this question was asked from ignorance or as the result of their hatred and contempt while they taunted Jesus. The Jews had continually accused Jesus of being a *deceiver*; that He had broken the law of Moses; that He is mad and demon-possessed, and because they had taunted Him with all these insults, it is probable they now made fun of Him suggesting that He *was going to kill Himself thereby going somewhere they could not go and follow Him.*

In spite of the continued taunting, ridicule, and rejection by many of the Jews, Jesus continued to teach in patient kindness to those few who did believe Him. This can be an example to us to continue telling others about the message of Jesus, notwithstanding opposition, because a few will be saved. We see here the remarkable patience that Jesus demonstrated in enduring the contradiction of unbelieving hecklers. We see that *He*

accepted their contempt without retaliating. Another good lesson we might learn from His example.²

These Jewish leaders questioned, very likely in a taunting fashion in front of Jesus, if He would commit suicide and thus be unreachable. Once again, the people misunderstood His teaching. Some may have actually thought He was planning to kill Himself and made fun of Him for that. Others may have just used the suicide suggestion as a way of taunting Jesus. Suicide to Jews was a punishable act, for the Jews were taught to honor all life. The Bible does not directly condemn suicide but rather treats it as an indication of moral failure.³ If Jesus committed suicide, some Jews believed Jesus would go to a place of judgment; and this, they reasoned, was why they could not follow Him.

Actually just the opposite was true. They were the ones who had nothing stable to believe in. They were the ones who would be going to the place of judgment. Jesus was returning to His Father in Heaven, and nobody can go there who has not trusted in Jesus as their Savior. Jesus came from Heaven and it was to Heaven He would return. These Jews were from the earth. They did not know God, and they were not willing to listen to the message Jesus brought from God concerning salvation and eternal life. They would therefore not be able to get into Heaven where Jesus was going, and they would die in their sins, which results in eternal Hell.

Acts 4:12 NLT:

¹²
There is salvation in no one else! God has given no other name under heaven by which we must be saved."

So many people in the world today share the same feeling that many Jews had for Jesus when He spoke to them directly. They hate Jesus and they hate any one who believes His message. But one day in the future, perhaps in a dying moment, they will look for a Savior to believe in and not be able to find Him because it is too late.

In His prayer the night of the Last Supper, Jesus prayed to His Father for His followers, saying,

John 17:14-16 NLT:

¹⁴
I have given them your word. And the world hates them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world.

¹⁵
I'm not asking you to take them out of the world, but to keep them safe from the evil one.

¹⁶
They do not belong to this world any more than I do.

Think about the similarities between the Jews here in Jesus' day and those who reject His message today. They found any trivial objection they could to contradict what Jesus was

² *Barnes' Notes on the New Testament*; WordSearch Bible, John 8:22

³ Elwell, Walter A.; Comfort, Philip Wesley: *Tyndale Bible Dictionary*. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers, 2001 (Tyndale Reference Library), S. 1227.

saying. People use that same tactic today. Rather than allowing all the evidence to be presented and then studying and evaluating it, people then and now immediately reject what does not agree with their pre-conceived ideas. Many in Jesus' day did not want to believe the Messiah would be a gentle, loving teacher who brought a message directly from God. Neither did they want someone who was going to interfere with their selfish interests for money and power. They wanted a conquering military hero who would restore the power and prestige of Israel and provide them with opportunities for even greater power and riches. Today many people do not want to believe in a God who would send anyone to Hell. They do not want to believe in a God who would be judgmental toward those who had abortions, practiced homosexuality, or wanted to fulfill all the selfish desires of their heart. They want a god who will wink at such things. They want a god of tolerance. So both then and now people will find any excuse possible to get what they want for themselves. But the kind of "god" they are looking for is wishy-washy and unpredictable. What we really need is a God who is stable, consistent, just, strong, and unchangeable—a God we can count on.

I find it incredibly foolish for people to criticize a man who brings nothing but good news to them for their consideration. There was nothing in Jesus' nature that suggested He desired anything for Himself. He always referred to His mission as being a messenger from God, and there was nothing that He did or said that would contradict that truth. He never taught anything that was not consistent with the Old Testament Scripture. Further, He could prove who He was by the miracles God enabled Him to perform as well as the prophecies that were fulfilled by Him in accordance with the predictions of Scripture. In addition I am sure that if they had looked into Jesus' face they would have seen the glory of God shining there.

If they knew God, loved God and honored Him, they could not help but treating Jesus the same way. In every way Jesus reflected the nature of God. Jesus was right when He said that they neither knew Him or His Father. According to Psalm 76:1 God was to be honored in Israel. These Jews did not honor God because they did not really know Him. People today do not honor Him because they do not know Him either. No one is as incurably blind as the person who absolutely refuses to see.

Let us read again Jesus' words to Phillip about who Jesus is and the call to believe in Him.

John 14:9-11 NLT:

⁹ *Jesus replied, "Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and yet you still don't know who I am? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father! So why are you asking me to show him to you?"*

¹⁰ *Don't you believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words I speak are not my own, but my Father who lives in me does his work through me.*

¹¹ *Just believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me. Or at least believe because of the work you have seen me do.*

John 8:23-30 NAS:

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.*

This comparison Jesus makes, saying He is from above and they are from below, was just another way of His telling them that He came from Heaven and knew what Heaven was like. They were from the world and did not know what Heaven was like. Therefore His desires and affections were for the things of Heaven while their desires and affections were for the things of this world. So then, how could they expect to go where He will be going when the things they want are so directly opposite of those things Jesus values? Jesus had no interest in the world's wealth or power. He had no interest in the things that satisfied lustful pleasures. He was totally consumed by heavenly and divine pursuits. If they were not born again into a similar manner of thinking and living, they would not be able to enter Heaven.

Having come from Heaven Jesus knew God, and God had sent Him to tell the people of the world what God and Heaven were like. That made Jesus a far greater authority regarding God and Heaven than anyone from the world.

I like the way James describes this in James 3:15-17 NLT:

¹⁵ *For jealousy and selfishness are not God's kind of wisdom. Such things are earthly, unspiritual, and demonic.*

¹⁶ *For wherever there is jealousy and selfish ambition, there you will find disorder and evil of every kind.*

¹⁷ *But the wisdom from above is first of all pure. It is also peace loving, gentle at all times, and willing to yield to others. It is full of mercy and good deeds. It shows no favoritism and is always sincere.*

So when Jesus told them again that they would die in their sins if they did not believe He was from God, He knew what He was talking about, and He wanted them to believe Him so that they could be saved. But again because they did not know God the Father they seemed incapable of recognizing God the Son. There must have been very special qualities about Jesus that would make Him unlike any other earthly mortal. Surely if people would have paid attention to Him and the things He came to teach they would have known He was from Heaven.

Verse 26 of John 8: *“I have many things to speak and to judge concerning you, but He who sent Me is true.”* Jesus is saying that if they do not believe in Him, the day is coming when He will judge many of the things they have done and this judgment will be the result of their dying in their sins. But what He is trying to get them to understand at this time is that He is telling them the things the Father told Jesus He should tell them.

Because these leaders either could not or would not accept Jesus’ teaching, Jesus’ identity remained a mystery to them. So in verse 28 Jesus told them that they would not realize that He was the Messiah until He is *“lifted up,”* which means crucified on a cross. Then they will realize who He really was (John 3:14; 12:32). But even when presented with that kind of evidence many will still not accept Him or His teaching. Again the reason for this is that they did not know the Father and therefore they could not accept the Son.

The word translated *“lifted up”* has a dual meaning: *“lifted up in crucifixion,”* and *“lifted up in exaltation and glorification.”* Jesus often combined the two, for He saw His crucifixion in terms of glory and not just suffering.⁴ This statement was also the first indication He gave of how He would die and who would be responsible for His death. They would have been better able to understand who Jesus was if they had been familiar with their own Old Testament prophecy in Isaiah which predicted Christ’s crucifixion.

Isaiah 52:14--53:12 NLT:

¹⁴ *But many were amazed when they saw him. His face was so disfigured he seemed hardly human, and from his appearance, one would scarcely know he was a man.*

¹⁵ *And he will startle many nations. Kings will stand speechless in his presence. For they will see what they had not been told; they will understand what they had not heard about.*

¹ *Who has believed our message? To whom has the Lord revealed his powerful arm?*

² *My servant grew up in the Lord’s presence like a tender green shoot, like a root in dry ground. There was nothing beautiful or majestic about his appearance, nothing to attract us to him.*

³ *He was despised and rejected— a man of sorrows, acquainted with deepest grief. We turned our backs on him and looked the other way. He*

⁴ John 12:23; 13:30–31; 17:1.

was despised, and we did not care.

⁴ *Yet it was our weaknesses he carried; it was our sorrows that weighed him down. And we thought his troubles were a punishment from God, a punishment for his own sins!*

⁵ *But he was pierced for our rebellion, crushed for our sins. He was beaten so we could be whole. He was whipped so we could be healed.*

⁶ *All of us, like sheep, have strayed away. We have left God's paths to follow our own. Yet the Lord laid on him the sins of us all.*

⁷ *He was oppressed and treated harshly, yet he never said a word. He was led like a lamb to the slaughter. And as a sheep is silent before the shearers, he did not open his mouth.*

⁸ *Unjustly condemned, he was led away. No one cared that he died without descendants, that his life was cut short in midstream. But he was struck down for the rebellion of my people.*

⁹ *He had done no wrong and had never deceived anyone. But he was buried like a criminal; he was put in a rich man's grave.*

¹⁰ *But it was the Lord's good plan to crush him and cause him grief. Yet when his life is made an offering for sin, he will have many descendants. He will enjoy a long life, and the Lord's good plan will prosper in his hands.*

¹¹ *When he sees all that is accomplished by his anguish, he will be satisfied. And because of his experience, my righteous servant will make it possible for many to be counted righteous, for he will bear all their sins.*

¹² *I will give him the honors of a victorious soldier, because he exposed himself to death. He was counted among the rebels. He bore the sins of many and interceded for rebels.*

The cross would reveal that Jesus was God's Word to mankind and that what He tried to teach them was just what His Father taught Him. So in spite of widespread unbelief and official rejection, the ministry of Jesus did bring many to faith (John 7:31).

Jesus boldly made several claims to be deity (John 8:28). He said He would judge, and judgment (to the Jews) belonged only to God. He claimed to be sent by God, and He claimed to have heard from God the things that He taught. How did the religious leaders respond to these clear affirmations of deity? They did not understand. God reveals His truth to the "babes" and not to the "wise and prudent" (Luke 10:21).

It would be in His death, burial, resurrection, and ascension that Jesus would be revealed to the Jewish nation. This was the message Peter preached at Pentecost (Acts 2), not only the death of Jesus but also His resurrection and exaltation to glory. Even a Roman soldier, beholding the events at Golgotha would confess, "*Truly this Man was the Son of God*" (Mark 15:39). The early church, following the example of their Lord (Luke 24:25-27), would show from the Old Testament prophecies both the sufferings and the glory of the Messiah.

Jesus made two more amazing claims: not only was He sent by the Father, but the Father was with Him because He always did what pleased the Father. It might appear to them that Jesus was alone but because of His complete obedience to God, God was right there with Jesus at all times providing Him with all the support and strength He needed to do what the Father sent Him to do. No doubt His enemies reacted violently to these words; but some of the listeners put their faith in Him. Whether this was true saving faith or not (see John 2:23–25), we cannot tell; but Jesus' words to them would indicate that they knew what they were doing. How could some people resist what must have been a presence that conveyed supernatural qualities reflecting the glory of Heaven itself? You may recall what was reported concerning the death of Stephen when he was brought before the high council in Acts 6:15 NLT:

15 At this point everyone in the high council stared at Stephen, because his face became as bright as an angel's.

Because of the constant presence of God with Jesus, there must have been something similarly captivating about Jesus' appearance and behavior that was obvious to many of the people.

Salvation is a matter of life or death. People who live in their sins and reject the Savior must die in their sins. There is no alternative. We either receive salvation by grace or experience condemnation under God's Law. We either walk in the light and have eternal life, or walk in the darkness and experience eternal death.⁵

In this world where so many things are tentative and it's hard to know what you can believe in, you can believe this evidence that Jesus is indeed God's Son who brought salvation to us. Commercials may mislead you, the stock market may crash, politicians may all prove corrupt, philosophies have their fallacies, but "*the Word of the Lord remains forever*" (1 Peter 1:24-25). The God of heaven Himself, the One who created this whole world, stands with open arms calling you to believe in Him, just as He called these Jewish people years ago to believe in Him.

While Jesus' words of reprimand may sound boastful or uncaring at times, Scripture makes it clear that the Pharisees and others who chose to reject him had been given ample evidence to believe:

- His miracles and acts of compassion
- His remarkable prophetic gift (see John 4:19, 29)
- His irrefutable teachings (see John 7:46; Matthew 22:46)
- His faultless character (John 8:29; see Acts 10:38)

Even as Jesus warned the Jews about the consequences of their unbelief, "*many ... believed in him*" (John 8:30).⁶ So let us never stop teaching those same things Jesus

⁵ Wiersbe, Warren W.: *The Bible Exposition Commentary*. Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1996, c1989, S. Jn 8:21.

⁶ Willmington, H. L.: *Willmington's Bible Handbook*. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers, 1997, S. 613.

taught during His earthly ministry. The promise is still that “*many will believe in Him.*” I trust that each of you is one of those “many.”