

# John 8:20-31

by St. John Chrysostom

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*In this sermon, St. John Chrysostom explores Jesus' teachings on belief, the nature of His mission, and the importance of understanding His divine authority.*

**Scripture:** John 8:24

**Topics:** "Divine Origin", "Unbelief Consequences"

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## Description

John Chrysostom preaches about Jesus speaking in the Temple, highlighting the Jews' folly in seeking to harm Him before His time, emphasizing that His hour had not yet come for crucifixion, showing that even the attempt on His life was by His divine dispensation. Jesus warns the Jews of seeking Him after His departure, foretelling His Resurrection and the consequences of unbelief leading to death in sins. He challenges their carnal mindset, asserting His divine origin and unity with the Father, and reveals that He came to save, not to judge. Despite signs and teachings, the Jews fail to recognize Jesus and His message about the Father, leading to their eventual punishment.

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## Transcript

These words spoke Jesus in the treasury, as He taught in the Temple; and no man laid hands on Him, for His hour was not yet come.

1. Oh the folly of the Jews! seeking Him as they did before the Passover, and then having found Him in the midst of them, and having often attempted to take Him by their own or by others' hands without being able; they were not even so awed by His power, but set themselves to their wickedness, and desisted not. For it says, that they continually made the attempt; These words spoke He in the treasury, teaching in the Temple; and no man laid hands on Him. He spoke in the Temple, and in the character of teacher, which was more adapted to rouse them, and He spoke those things because of which they were stung, and charged Him with making Himself equal to the Father. For the witness of two men is true, proves this. Yet still He spoke these words, It says, in the Temple, in the character of teacher, and no man laid hands on Him, for His hour was not yet come; that is, it was not yet the fitting time at which He would be crucified. So that even then the deed done was not of their power, but of His dispensation, for they had long desired, but had not been able, nor would they even then have been able, except He had consented.

John 8:21

Then said Jesus unto them, I go My way, and you shall seek Me.

Why says He this continually? To shame and terrify their souls; for observe what fear this saying caused in them. Although they desired to kill Him that they might be rid of Him, they yet ask, whither He goes, such great things did they imagine from the matter. He desired also to show them another thing, that the deed would not be effected through their force; but He showed it to them in a figure beforehand, and already foretold the Resurrection by these words.

John 8:22

Then said the Jews, Will he kill himself?

What then does Christ? To remove their suspicion, and to show that such an act is sin, He says,

John 8:23

You are from beneath.

What He says, is of this kind: It is no wonder that you imagine such things, you who are carnal men, and have no spiritual thoughts, but I shall not do anything of the kind, for,

I am from above; you are of the world.

Here again He speaks of their worldly and carnal imaginations, whence it is clear that the, I am not of this world, does not mean that He had not taken upon Him flesh, but that He was far removed from their wickedness. For He even says, that His disciples were not of the world John 15:19, yet they had flesh. As then Paul, when he says, You are not in the flesh Romans 8:9, does not mean that they are incorporeal, so Christ when He says, that His disciples are not of the world, does nothing else than testify to their heavenly wisdom.

John 8:24

I said therefore unto you that...if you believe not that I am He, you shall die in your sins.

For if He came to take away the sin of the world, and if it is impossible for men to put that off in any other way except by the washing, it needs must be that he that believes not must depart hence, having the old man; since he that will not by faith slay and bury that old man, shall die in him, and shall go away to that place to suffer the punishment of His former sins. Wherefore He said, He that believes not is judged already John 3:18; not merely through his not believing, but because he de parts parts hence having his former sins upon him.

John 8:25

Then said they unto Him, Who are you?

Oh folly! After so long a time, such signs and teaching, they ask, Who are you? What then says Christ?

The same that I told you from the beginning.

What He says, is of this kind; You are not worthy to hear My words at all, much less to learn who I am, for you say all that you do, tempting Me, and giving heed to none of My sayings. And all this I could now prove against you. For this is the sense of,

John 8:26

I have many things to say and to judge of you.

I could not only prove you guilty, but also punish you; but He that sent Me, that is, the Father, wills not this. For I have come not to judge the world, but to save the world, since God sent not His Son to judge the world, He says, but to save the world. John 3:17 If now He has sent Me for this, and He is true, with good cause I judge no one now. But these things I speak that are for your salvation, not what are for your condemnation. He speaks thus, lest they should deem that it was through weakness that on hearing so much from them He went not to extremities, or that He knew not their secret thoughts and scoffings.

John 8:27

They understood not that He spoke to them of the Father.

Oh folly! He ceased not to speak concerning Him, and they knew Him not. Then when after working many signs, and teaching them, He drew them not to Himself, He next speaks to them of the Cross, saying,

John 8:28-29

When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you shall know that I Am, and that I speak not of Myself, and that He that sent Me is with Me. And the Father has not left Me alone.

2. He shows that He rightly said, the same that I said to you from the beginning. So little heed they gave to His words. When you have lifted up the Son of Man. Do ye not expect that you then shall certainly rid yourselves of Me, and slay Me? But I tell you that then you shall most know that I Am, by reason of the miracles, the resurrection, and the destruction (of Jerusalem). For all these things were sufficient to manifest His power. He said not, Then you shall know who I am; for, when you shall see, He says, that I suffer nothing from death, then you shall know that I Am, that is, the Christ, the Son of God, who govern all things, and am not opposed to Him. For which cause He adds, and of Myself I speak nothing. For you shall know both My power and My unanimity with the Father. Because the, of Myself I speak nothing, shows that His Substance differs not (from that of the Father), and that He utters nothing save that which is in the mind of the Father. For when you have been driven away from your place of worship, and it is not allowed you even to serve Him as hitherto, then you shall know that He does this to avenge Me, and because He is angry with those who would not hear Me. As though He had said, Had I been an enemy and a stranger to God, He would not have stirred up such wrath against you. This also Esaias declares, He shall give the wicked in return for His burial Isaiah 53:9, Septuagint; and David, Then shall He speak unto them in His wrath Psalm 2:5; and Christ Himself, Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. Matthew 23:38 And His parables declare the same thing when He says, What shall the Lord of that vineyard do to those husbandmen? He shall miserably destroy those wicked men. Matthew 21:40-41 Do you see that everywhere He speaks thus, because He is not yet believed? But if He will destroy them, as He will, (for, Bring hither, It says, those which would not that I should reign over them, and slay them,) wherefore says He that the deed is not His, but His Father's? He addresses Himself to their weakness, and at the same time honors Him that begot Him. Wherefore He said not, I leave your house desolate, but, it is left; He has put it impersonally. But by saying, How often would I have gathered your children together -- and you would not, and then adding, is left, He shows that He wrought the desolation. For since, He tells them, when you were benefited and healed of your infirmities, you would not know Me, you shall know by being punished who I am.

And the Father is with Me. That they may not deem the who sent Me to be a mark of inferiority, He says, is with Me; the first belongs to the Dispensation, the second to the Godhead.

And He has not left Me alone, for I do always those things that please Him.

Again He has brought down His discourse to a humbler strain, continually setting Himself against that which they asserted, that He was not of God, and that He kept not the Sabbath. To this He replies, I do always those things that are pleasing unto Him; showing that it was pleasing unto Him even that the Sabbath should be broken. So, for instance, just before the Crucifixion He said, Think ye that I cannot call upon My Father? Matthew 26:53 And yet by merely saying, Whom do you seek? c. xviii. 4, 6 He cast them down backwards. Why then says He not, Think ye that I cannot destroy you, when He had proved this by deed? He condescends to their infirmity. For He took great pains to show that He did nothing contrary to the Father. Thus He speaks rather after the manner of a man; and as He has not left Me alone, was spoken, so also was the, I do always those things that are pleasing unto Him.

John 8:30

As He spoke these words, many believed on Him.

When He brought down His speech to a lowly strain, many believed on Him. Do you still ask wherefore He speaks humbly? Yet the Evangelist clearly alluded to this when he said, As He spoke these things, many believed on Him. By this all but proclaiming aloud to us, Oh hearer, be not confounded if you hear any lowly expression, for they who after such high teaching were not yet persuaded that He was of the Father, were with good reason made to hear humbler words, that they might believe. And this is an excuse for those things which shall be spoken in a humble way. They believed then, yet not as they ought, but carelessly and as it were by chance, being pleased and refreshed by the humility of the words. For that they had not perfect faith the Evangelist shows by their speeches after this, in which they insult Him again. And that these are the very same persons he has declared by saying,

John 8:31

Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on Him, If you continue in My word.

Showing that they had not yet received His doctrine, but only gave heed unto His words. Wherefore He speaks more sharply. Before He merely said, You shall seek Me John 7:34, but now He adds what is more, You shall die in your sins. John 8:21 And He shows how; because ye cannot when you have come to that place afterwards entreat Me.

These things which I speak unto the world. By these words He showed that He was now going forth to the Gentiles. But because they still knew not that He spoke to them of the Father, He again speaks of Him, and the Evangelist has put the reason of the humility of the expressions.

3. If now we will thus search the Scriptures, exactly and not carelessly, we shall be able to attain unto our salvation; if we continually dwell upon them, we shall learn right doctrine and a perfect life. For although a man be very hard, and stubborn, and proud, and profit nothing at other times, yet at least he shall gain fruit from this time, and receive benefit, if not so great as to admit of his being sensible of it, still he shall receive it. For if a man who passes by an ointment-maker's shop, or sits in one, is impregnated with the perfume even against his will, much more is this the case with one who comes to church. For as idleness is born of idleness, so too from working is generated a ready mind. Although you are full of ten thousand

sins, although you are impure, shun not the tarrying here. Wherefore, it may be said, when hearing I do not? It is no small profit to deem one's self wretched; this fear is not useless, this dread is not unseasonable. If only you groan that, hearing I do not, you will certainly come also to the doing at some time or other. For it cannot be that he who speaks with God, and hears God speak, should not profit. We compose ourselves at once and wash our hands when we desire to take the Bible into them. Do you see even before the reading what reverence is here? And if we go on with exactness, we shall reap great advantage. For we should not, unless it served to place the soul in reverence, have washed our hands; and a woman if she be unveiled straightway puts on her veil, giving proof of internal reverence, and a man if he be covered bares his head. Do you see how the outward behavior proclaims the inward reverence? Then moreover he that sits to hear groans often, and condemns his present life.

Let us then, beloved, give heed to the Scriptures, and if no other part be so, let the Gospels at least be the subjects of our earnest care, let us keep them in our hands. For straightway when you have opened the Book you shall see the name of Christ there, and shall hear one say, The birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise. When His mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, she was found with Child of the Holy Ghost. Matthew 1:18 He that hears this will immediately desire virginity, will marvel at the Birth, will be freed from earthly things. It is not a little thing when you see the Virgin deemed worthy of the Spirit, and an Angel talking with her. And this upon the very surface; but if you persevere to go on unto the end, you shall loathe all that pertains to this life, shall mock at all worldly things. If you are rich, you shall think nothing of wealth, when you hear that she who was (the wife) of a carpenter, and of humble family, became the mother of your Lord. If you are poor you shall not be ashamed of your poverty, when you hear that the Creator of the world was not ashamed of the meanest dwelling. Considering this, thou will not rob, you will not covet, you will not take the goods of others, but will rather be a lover of poverty, and despise wealth. And if this be the case, you shall banish all evil. Again, when you see Him lying in a manger, you will not be anxious to put golden garments about your child, or to cause your wife's couch to be inlaid with silver. And if you care not for these things, you will not do either the deeds of covetousness and rapine, which are caused by them. Many other things you may gain which I cannot separately enumerate, but they will know who have made the trial. Wherefore I exhort you both to obtain Bibles, and to retain together with the Bibles the sentiments they set forth, and to write them in your minds. The Jews because they gave no heed were commanded to suspend their books from their hands; but we place them not even in our hands but in our house, when we ought to stamp them on our heart. Thus cleansing our present life, we shall obtain the good things that are to come to which may we all attain, through the grace and lovingkindness of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom and with whom, to the Father and the Holy Ghost be glory, now and ever, and world without end. Amen.

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Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/st-john-chrysostom/john-820-31/>

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