

Gospel of John - episode 16

Chapter 8

Welcome to our sharing on St. John's Gospel. I want to continue with Chapter 8, and the wonderful event where Jesus shows himself as the merciful judge in a situation that was meant to bring him down. It seemed as if the Jewish leaders this time could bring him down in public. "The Scribes and Pharisees brought a woman along who had been caught committing adultery, and making her stand there in full view of everybody, they said to Jesus, 'Master, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery. Moses ordered us in the law to condemn women like this to Death by stoning, 'What have you to say?'" This is very interesting; we need to take it step by step because there is an awful lot here. Jesus is on trial, and the woman is on trial as well. We were told back in 8:2 that when Jesus went into the temple that all the people went to him. This means they left all the other rabbis who were full of jealousy and envy because Jesus was getting all the attention.

Then suddenly, the leadership interferes in the whole thing; they have no respect for Jesus. Without his permission they barge into the crowd - force the people to stand aside - and they get Jesus' full attention. Because after all, they are the leaders. They have dragged a woman along who was caught committing adultery, and they throw her there in front of Jesus putting her in full view of everybody. Now, we have to see these men as the leaders of Israel. They were the teachers of the law, and it seems as if they have the weight of the law on their side. So, you and I are going to do a little bit of 'Sherlock Holmes' on them to see if they do the law. First, look at Proverbs 10:12, which says that, "hatred provokes disputes, but love covers all offences". What these men have done is they have exposed this woman and her sin in front of everybody, so they have destroyed her reputation completely. In the eyes of the people, she is dead, and they want her physically dead also!

Watch the contrast with the way Jesus deals with them, the accusers, and also the way that Jesus deals with the woman. You must listen carefully because this is a trial with Jesus put in the position of a judge. The woman is the accused with the leaders the accusers. The crowds that have gathered around Jesus, are the jury. Everybody is involved. Everybody wants to know how Jesus would behave in a situation like this. So, listen carefully to what the men said. "Master, they said, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery". **Where were they?** Surely an act of adultery is committed in a private house, in a private bedroom. If that was so, and they caught her in the very act of committing adultery, they have plotted her downfall. This was a trap. The scholars admit that this was the trap of a jealous husband who probably wanted to get rid of her to get another woman. No love! But it is even worse than that. They are now going to use this woman to trap Jesus!

What John wants you to see is that there are **two victims** here; one is guilty and one is innocent. In the context of the whole drama of the gospel, you need to understand that the innocent one is going to give his life for the guilty. Now, remember the day of Yom Kippur. On that day, they brought two goats to the priest. The two of them had to be male; they had to be very pure and so on, because you couldn't offer anything that wasn't completely pure to God. They chose one of them and put the sins of the people on

that one and sent it back into the desert. They took the pure and holy one, and sacrificed it for the sins of the people, asking God's forgiveness. So, if you know that this mystery is in the background, you will look on this event slightly differently than you might have looked on it before. Some people are afraid to comment on this text because they call it 'the sex text'! It is nothing to do with that. Nothing, whatever. We are looking at how God deals with sinners. We have two victims. The next thing that the accusers say - because they are the prosecution in the case - they say that 'Moses has ordered us in the law - that's in the first five books of the Bible [the Torah], that women like this should be condemned to Death by stoning'. So, in the eyes of the crowds, they are using the weight of the law to underline the fact that this woman should be killed. They appear to be right, but I told you we have to be 'Sherlock Holmes'. We must go back to the law. We must find out what the law **actually says**. This is where a lot of people go wrong when they are reading a text. They won't go to the trouble of searching the background to find out what the scriptures say.

Deuteronomy 22:22 and Leviticus 20:10 say the same thing. "If a man is caught sleeping with another man's wife, both must die, the man who has slept with her and the woman herself. There's nothing about 'women like this'. There is nothing about women caught in adultery. It says that the two of them should die. Now, if you are with me doing your Sherlock Holmes thing, and you must find the evidence to kill this woman, if they caught the woman in the act of committing adultery, they have the man. They have both because it takes two. So where is the man? It means that they have no intention of bringing the man to justice. They are merely going to use this woman to bring Jesus down. So, they are committing great sins, grave acts of injustice. Some of the scholars think that the guilty man is in the lineup of the accusers, but the text doesn't say that, so I won't say it. The law says both of them should die or there's no justice here at all. Now, they have said that the lay people don't understand the scriptures, so they can make pronouncement like this, and the people think that the leaders are speaking the truth. But Jesus knows better. He is able to read them like a book. He knows their motivation. He knows exactly what they are about.

Jesus knows that all of them are complicit in this sin. If all of them are complicit in this sin, that puts a completely different picture on the whole thing. They have no authority whatsoever to condemn her. They said to Jesus, 'What have you to say?' We will deal with the point I've just made in a moment. John says they asked him this as a test in order to find something against him. In other words, the leaders give Jesus what is called the Solomon Question. The Solomon Question is, if you say yes, you are in trouble, and if you say no, you are in trouble. Now, the Synoptic Gospels give us an example of this in dealing with paying taxes to Caesar, but this is the way John shows us. If Jesus is going to be able to deal with this in truth, then he has to show them who he is. He is Wisdom Incarnate. The leaders don't know that Jesus is Wisdom Incarnate. They don't accept who he is at all. He is merely a man from Galilee pretending to be somebody big. They even insulted him by saying, 'Where did he learn how to read?'

They are not going to expect any wisdom from him. Why do they do this in public in front of this entire crowd? It is because the leaders want to destroy the faith that the people have in Jesus, so they want Jesus to do something wrong. In other words, the leadership want to be able to stone this woman to Death on the authority of Jesus, and that would destroy his reputation completely. It would destroy his

reputation as the friend of tax collectors and sinners. The Romans had taken the right of the Death penalty off the Jewish Sanhedrin. They were not allowed to kill anybody, but of course, you will find in the Acts of the Apostles, Chapter 7, that they lynched Stephen, and apparently got away with it. So, they would like to stone this person to Death on the authority of Jesus so that Jesus will get into trouble with the Romans. Jesus can neither say yes nor no. If Jesus says no, then they are going to say he is acting against the law. They already have an accusation against him that he is breaking the Sabbath. They will say he is acting against the law. It seems as if they have him trapped, but who can trap God? Who can trap at the Lord? What does Jesus do? He does something very simple but very profound. "They asked him this to test him, looking for something to get against him. But Jesus bent down and started writing on the ground with his finger. And as they persisted with their question, he looked up and he said, If there is any one of you who has not sinned, let him be the first to throw a stone at her. And then he bent down and he wrote on the ground a second time. When they heard this, they went away one by one, beginning with the eldest, until Jesus was left alone with the woman". Let us take it slowly. There's a lot going on. Why does Jesus bend down and write in the ground? There is a particular symbol of God which is like this: sometimes the thumb is turned inwards. It represents the finger of God's right-hand. That was their symbol for God's authority.

Go back to the Book of Exodus where God worked miracles through Moses. The initial miracles were repeated by the sorcerers and the magicians. They could repeat the sign, but they couldn't reverse it. But when they came to the plague of sores, when even the magicians themselves were covered with the sores, they went to the Pharaoh and they said, 'back off. This is the finger of God'. This is the sign that the Almighty is really at work. That's very important. In the Synoptic Gospels, when Jesus is in controversy with the leaders when they accused him of being devil possessed, he tells them that his exorcisms are the finger of God - the sign of God's authority at work. So here you have the finger of God writing in the dust of the earth. Now, that is more important than you think, because if you go back to the creation of man, the name that was given to the man was 'Adamah', which means dust. We say 'Adam' in English. I think it should be called 'dusty'. So, what you have is the finger of God writing on the conscience of man.

Jesus wrote in the ground the list of their sins, but he didn't allow any of the crowd to see it. He did not expose them in public. They were not going to lose any reputation from what he was writing in the ground because he only had to rub it with his foot to get rid of it. He was not exposing them. Love covers a multitude of sins, yet the finger of God's right-hand really was working. Some of the scholars seem to think that Jesus may have written Jeremiah 17:13, "O Lord, Hope of Israel, all who forsake you will be put to shame. Those who turn away from you will be written in the dust because they have forsaken the Lord, the fountain of living water". That prayer actually fits what John is trying to tell us here. Jesus has already told them, of course, that if they forsake the fountain of living water, that they leave themselves open to justice because they are rejecting the salvation that God has sent to them. Now, you and I are always reading a translation, and it says, 'he started writing in the ground'.

But if you read this in the Greek, it says that he wrote a record against them. That's different. When Jesus wrote in the ground, he was actually writing their sins. Hence, when he says to them later, 'can any of you

convict me of sin? It's actually terribly important. They persist in this charade of pretending to be the important ones and having the power and the weight of the law behind them for this particular action. Jesus is totally unmoved by that, so he writes a second time just to make sure they get the message. Eventually, he has been forced to judge because they keep accusing. They will do that when he is on the Cross as well. They will still accuse, accuse, accuse. Jesus stood up and gave the most incredible judgement. "If there is any one of you" - that's all the accusers – "who has not sinned, cast a stone". What Jesus does is that he obeys the law that someone should be stoned to Death for adultery, but if you are going to obey the law, you must obey it fully. The law laid down that an adulterer could not accuse an adulterer; a murderer could not accuse a murderer, and a thief could not accuse a thief - just to give you three examples.

So, when Jesus said, 'If you have not sinned', what he is saying is that if in the sexual area of your life, you have never sinned then you have the authority to kill this person. He was on very safe ground, wasn't he? Isn't that the weakest area of our lives? Isn't that where we fall so frequently? What they wanted was that this woman would be killed on his authority. He said, No, you are the leaders. You can kill her on your authority, but you must obey the law correctly. You must obey the law fully. His judgement is absolutely incredible. It would have left them completely stunned. John says something really wonderful. He says, 'at this, they walked away one by one in rank from the greatest to the least'. It's a wonderful statement of John. he says that all have sinned from the oldest to the youngest. There was nobody without sin. The youngest would have been the most fiery and would want to stay there as long as they could. But when the others were gone, they had to go as well. The crowds witnessed this incredible response - of Jesus had all of these accusers walk away.

Jesus deals with these men so delicately that I'm sure you have forgotten the woman because in this trial, Jesus concentrates completely on the leaders, and on the fact that if you are going to use authority, you must use it according to God's Will and according to God's love. What everybody misses in this particular text is that Jesus has allowed every single one of them to go away knowing that they are guilty. He could have condemned them. He could have exposed them in front of the crowds. He could have destroyed their reputation in front of everybody. He doesn't do that. Why? "For God so loved the world that he sent his only Son not to condemn the world, but that through him the world might be saved". Jesus was going to give his life for all of these men whom he loved infinitely, and he wanted all of them to be saved. He didn't want any of them to be destroyed. He belongs to a different world, to a different level, to a different kingdom. If we forget that Jesus was going to die for these men, we have misread this text completely.

They **are all forgiven**, yet none of them repents. It is only when the men are gone completely that you remember that there is a woman still there. The trial isn't over. He has got rid of the accusers. The case for the prosecution has been thrown out, but what about the person who has been accused? There isn't any doubt in this text that the woman is guilty, so what is he going to do? Here is a delicate moment. You see the delicacy of Jesus's own life here. You see the purity of his own life. Everybody has been staring at this woman, thrown on the ground there in all her sin. It seems that Jesus waited until now to even look at her; he seemed to protect her with the delicacy of his love. "Jesus was left alone with the woman who remained standing there. He looked up. [He was bending towards the ground] He looked up and he said,

Woman, Where are they?” Now, the first thing I want you to notice is that Jesus has addressed this woman with exactly the same title with which he addressed his own Mother in chapter 2 - the holiest of all women!

He is not addressing her as to whether she is holy or unholy. He knows that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, as Paul says in Romans 3:23. He knows that. He knows that the men are guilty and the women are guilty and the crowd is guilty, and we are all guilty. He knows that - **and** that he came to give his life for us. But he speaks to her with such respect that he gives her back the dignity that they have robbed from her. He tries to give her back something so that she can begin to live again. He said, “has no one condemned you? And she said, No one, sir”. Now, sir is Kyrie, it is Lord. Now, that tells you something about this woman - listening to all that has gone on - she realises that this person has got to be the most extraordinary human being she has ever come across. She may not realise he is the Messiah, but she addresses him with respect and reverence. Then verse 11 gives you the most wonderful response: “neither do I condemn you”. Jesus didn't come into the world to condemn anybody.

If you go to Matthew Chapter 7, he tells us not to condemn anybody. It's not our job. It's not our business. He tells us to love and to forgive and to serve, which is what he did himself. So “he said to her, go away and don't sin anymore”. Now, the interesting thing is, in this particular text, there appears to be no evidence that the woman actually repented! She may have, but there is no evidence in the text. There is no evidence in the text that the men repented either. So, what is John saying? He is saying that whether we accept salvation or reject it, that God loves us infinitely anyway, that Jesus would give his life for us anyway. It's totally astounding. We do nothing to deserve what God has given to us. Nothing, whatever. We cannot deserve this love. The marvellous thing for me in this text at the beginning of John Chapter 8 is that forgiveness, love, grace, mercy, and salvation are given to people who don't deserve it. And that's exactly the position of all human beings. On that day, Misera met Misericordia; Misery met great Mercy.

Those of us who have learned any level of wisdom run to the Lord with our misery, knowing that we will receive great mercy. There is a lot for us to learn in this text. The fact that it is put in here right in the centre of this great controversy, I think, is an act of genius on the part of John. Thank you for listening.

interval

Welcome to our Sharing on St. John's Gospel. In this episode, we continue our reflection on John Chapter 8. We have just finished talking about that wonderful event in which Jesus showed himself as the merciful and kind judge when a sinner was brought to him whom everybody wanted to condemn. One of the interesting aspects of that incident was the fact that Jesus didn't condone her sin. He forgave her. It's a completely different thing altogether. That is the way the Lord deals with us. He doesn't condone sin. He doesn't agree with our bad behaviour. He asks us to change. Therefore, the woman was told to go and sin no more, just as the man who had been 38 years sick in Chapter 5 was told to go and sin no more because the greatest disaster in her life was sin, not anything else.

We now want to go into the great controversy that is in Chapter 8. It happens immediately after this when Jesus - who has shown them incredible light with regard to his wisdom - declares himself the light of the world. This is John 8:12. "Jesus spoke to the people again and he said, I am the light of the world. Anyone who follows me will not be walking in the dark. He will have the light of life". Now, this statement that Jesus is making is extremely important. He made this statement in the court of the women. If Jesus spoke in the court of the men, the women couldn't come in and hear. If he goes out into the court of the women, then all the women of Israel can hear. This controversy is going on among all the people of Israel. It has nothing to do with the Gentiles. The Court of the Women was also called the Treasury. In this court, during the Feast of Tabernacles, they had four huge golden candlesticks, which they lit for the eight days of the Feast. It communicated a wonderful light to everybody, reminding them of the hidden but marvellous Presence of God in the temple. In fact, in this feast they were celebrating God as their light. Psalm 27:1 It says, "the Lord is my light and my salvation. Whom shall I fear?" The woman that we have been dealing with would go away really able to say that 'the Lord is my light and he is my salvation. I have nothing to fear'. Now, the Book of Baruch, Chapter 5:9, says that God will guide Israel in joy by the light of his glory, and he will guide them with his mercy and with integrity as an escort. That is exactly what they are finding in Jesus - the mercy, the integrity, the light, the wisdom. Secondly, in this feast, they were celebrating God as the author of light. Not only God is light, but God is the author of light. Go back to Genesis when God said, "Let there be light, and there was light". Psalm 36:9, "With you is the fountain of life, and in your light, we see light".

The crowds that Jesus is teaching find that when he is speaking, they see and they understand. But when they go back to deal with the leadership and their blindness and darkness, the crowds become confused again. They are going from the level of below to the level of above, back and forth, until they are thoroughly confused and they don't know what to think. The third thing that they were celebrating during this feast is that during their time in the wilderness, in the Exodus, God accompanied them as a pillar of light. This is extremely important. Exodus Chapter 13:21-22, "the Lord went before them by night in the form of a pillar of fire to give them light so that they could continue their march day and night". This was a very special prodigy that was given to them in the wilderness, because marching through the wilderness they had dreadful heat during the day, so the obvious time to travel was at night. But at night, you had no light. God Himself provided the light.

Now, Jesus is saying, 'I am the pillar of light. God himself has come to you as a pillar of light'. This should not have been totally new to them. The Prophet Zechariah 14:6-7, foretold that the Messiah would usher in an era of light. They also knew that the Word of God gave light, because this is what the Book of Wisdom, 18:3-4 says. It speaks about the imperishable light of God's law, which was given to the world through this people. So, it's against this background that God is light; God is the author of light that He was the pillar of fire who accompanied them, that Jesus is trying to say to them, **I am here. The pillar of fire is here.** The era of light that you have been expecting is here, and it's here **in me** and **through me**. In Jesus, they have the new Torah, the new law to guide them. In accepting Jesus, they lose nothing because he is the fulfilment of all scripture. They should realise that the Father and the Son are working together in tandem, as we have said throughout this commentary.

John has already informed us, the readers, back in Chapter 1, that Jesus is the light that shines in the darkness, a light that the darkness could not overpower. So, what he wants to say regarding the light is that the people know that the God of Israel, **THE GREAT I AM** - that He was present in the pillar of light. They knew God was with them on the journey. Jesus said, Yes, he was. He is, and to this very day and until the end of time, the Lord is with us. Jesus said before his Ascension, "I will be with you on all the days that are coming, even to the very end". But what he was saying was that the pillar of light, that incredible presence of God, was visibly present to them in this person who came from Galilee and from the little town of Nazareth. This was shocking both for the leaders as well as for the people, because they now heard him saying that he was the manifestation of the Father's Presence. So, if this is right, then the light of God has come to the temple in person. He is not only fulfilling all the scriptures, but he is surpassing all of their expectations of Messiah. **God himself is the Messiah.** Now, they knew that if their ancestors in the desert had not had that light they would have gone astray. They would never have made it to the promised land. They knew that. Jesus is telling them **now**, that without him as the light of the world, they will certainly go astray spiritually - as many different religions have gone astray without the light of Christ. We know from Chapter 1- and we will hear it again in the second half of the gospel - that Jesus alone knows the way to the Father: John 14:6, "I am the way, I am the truth, I am the life". So, if he is the way, the truth, and the life, there is no other way.

Now, you can expect that since the leadership don't accept Jesus, that the reaction to this is rather vicious, because they are reacting to him from the level of unbelief. From this level of below - the level of unbelief - where the Cosmos is, there is no way you could understand Jesus. No way at all. So, they set a legal trap for him. They were trying to use the woman to set a trap for Jesus earlier, and he passed that one. Now, the legal trap is something that you and I may not actually even notice in the text. Let me read it for you. "At this, the Pharisees - that is the leaders - said, you are testifying on your own behalf, and your testimony is not valid". Now, the thing is, they were right that if you are testifying for yourself, that the testimony is not valid. This is in Deuteronomy 17:6 and in Deuteronomy 19:15. You will also find it in Numbers 35:30. That is that in a court of justice, a person testifying for themselves was not admissible evidence. If you wanted a testimony, it had to come from others. You had to have two or three witnesses. Testimony from yourself was not acceptable. This time, they are fighting him with scripture - which is the way it should have been from the beginning - because they are scholars; although they accuse him of knowing nothing, they know very well that he knows the scriptures better than they do.

Jesus tells them that he had to testify on his own behalf, because who has been in eternity? Who has seen God? He alone has been in eternity. He alone has seen God. So, "Jesus said, It is true that I'm testifying on my own behalf, but my testimony is still valid because I know where I came from. [He has come from the Father, you see]. And I know where I'm going. [He's going back to the Father]. But you do not know either where I am coming from or where I am going. You judge by human standards" - which he has told them back in Chapter 7 not to do. "And he said, I judge no one". He is saying 'I don't condemn anybody'. He has come from Heaven; He is going back to Heaven. In what I call his X-ray vision, he is able to see that they don't accept him, and that therefore, have no idea either where he comes from or where he is going.

Now, that should have made a memory click to them because they all knew that there would be something mysterious about the Messiah: they wouldn't know where he came from. They also knew that when the Messiah came he would be hidden for years. That was exactly the case. Jesus was hidden for 30 years. He only came out for the final three and a half years of his life to do his public ministry. So, Jesus has fulfilled all the things that they believe about the Messiah, but they have already prejudged him and they are going to kill him. He knows that. He is not judging anybody, as you have seen when the men came to accuse the woman, and they were trying to bring Jesus down. He didn't judge them, and he didn't judge the woman. He said, "If I am forced to judge, my judgement will be sound because I am not alone. The one who sent me is with me". He says, The Father and I are working together in tandem. We are one. And they are beginning to hear this subject of Father, Father, Father. They know that Joseph of Nazareth is dead so they begin the discussion of, "Where is your Father?" And of course, if you bring up the subject of fatherhood, you are bringing up the subject of identity. 'Who are you?' There is a connexion between 'where is your father and who are you?'

So, they said to him in 8:19, "Where is your father?" Are they asking the question geographically? Because Joseph of Nazareth is dead, if that's what they are looking for. But they know from the way he is speaking that he is not speaking about Joseph of Nazareth at all. He is speaking about the Father in Heaven. They are going to have to clarify this. Jesus replied, "you do not know me". That means you do not have any relationship with me. You have rejected me completely. Therefore, you do not know my Father. You do not know the Lord in Heaven. "If you did know me, he said, you would know the Father. And if you knew the Father, you would know me". Because to know God is to have an intimate personal relationship with him. The leaders claimed to know God but you can see from their behaviour and their decisions that they are not acting like people who know God; they are not acting like people who truly have the Word of God in their hearts.

The opposite of that is that Jesus himself is keeping the scriptures. Look at 8:19, "they said, Where is your Father? And Jesus answered, You do not know me, nor do you know my Father. If you did know me, you would know my Father also" - because Jesus reveals the Father to them all the time. "These words were spoken in the treasury while teaching in the temple". That is how you know we are in the court of the women. No one arrested him because his time had not yet come. You will notice that Jesus is completely safe until God's kairos time for his great gift of himself in the Passion, Death and Resurrection. Until that time, he is completely safe. He knows that, and he knows they can't touch him because God is not going to allow it. If only they would seek the truth their blindness would be healed, but they are not going to seek the truth. So, in their blindness, they are going to try and extinguish the light, but they can't do it. We have been told in chapter one that the darkness cannot overcome the light. It will battle the light, but it can't overcome it.

Here is 8:21: "Again, Jesus said to them, I am going away. You will look for me, but you will die in your sin. Where I am going, you cannot come. They said, Is he going to kill himself? Is that what he means by, I am going away and you cannot come there? Jesus said, you are from below; I am from above". Jesus finally clarifies we are on completely different levels. I have been trying to clarify this for you all the time so that we could read this text clearly and not misunderstand what John is actually saying. Jesus tells them

that he is going away, so what does he mean by going away? Jesus is going away in his Reath, Resurrection, and Ascension into glory. 'You will look for me'. Now, the Jewish people have been searching for their Messiah for the last 2,000 years. It's really sad. 'You will look for me. But you will die in your sin'. That means that the day of salvation for that generation is over. God himself visited them. They received grace that nobody else ever received. They were given opportunities that nobody else ever received. Therefore, the responsibility to reply to that was very great.

The day of salvation is almost over for them because Jesus' hour is only a few months away. It will not be anybody else's fault if they are not saved. If they put themselves outside of redemption, that is their own choice. This is the thing that John is trying to put across to us, because don't forget the gospel wasn't written for this particular generation that Jesus was talking to. By the time John wrote the gospel, that generation was all gone. The gospel is written for you and me, and we are supposed to learn from these controversies and from these issues, and we are supposed to make decisions. The most dangerous gift that God has given to you and me is actually free will. Because of this free will, even if God himself is present in this room, I am still free to say, No, I don't want you. Go away. And if I say that to God, He will go away. That is the issue. This is what Jesus is trying to alert all of us to, that when the truth is presented to us, we have a responsibility to respond.

Of course, when Jesus says, 'you will die in your sin', these people are going to be dispersed into the very cosmos that they think is all wrong, and it's going to be an irreversible loss. It's going to be absolutely incredible. This particular generation Jesus is speaking to are sinning against the truth, and sinning grievously against the Lord. What is the truth? The truth is what this gospel has been telling us about Jesus, **who Jesus is**. Jesus has revealed the reality of who he is and the reality of who they are. If both of these realities are given to us, then we have the choice of either saying yes or no to redemption. Saint Paul gives us a bit of insight into this. Saint Paul says in 1 Corinthians 2:14, "the man who doesn't have the spirit of God, doesn't accept any of these things". This is what you see in the people who are fighting Jesus. They can't accept any of the things that come from the Spirit of God. They consider it foolishness, and they can't accept it, so you can see what's wrong with this particular generation.

No matter how awful it sounds, the chosen people must allow Jesus to confront them with the awesome reality that God is present to them. **Emmanuel, God with us**. That God has loved them so much that he came himself personally to save them. That the one they are speaking to is the same mystery that confronted Moses in the burning bush in Exodus Chapter 3. It's the same mystery that accompanied them in the pillar of fire when they were on their journey in the desert. Here **he is now present, incarnate in front of them**. "If you do not believe that I am he, Jesus said, you will die in your sins". Because the problem about receiving enormous grace is that you have great responsibility to respond to it. That is the difficulty. The text I've given you before fits this context, and so I'll say it again. Isaiah 43:11-13 said, "I am the Lord. There is no other saviour but me. It is I who have spoken, I who have saved, I who have made the proclamation".

This is what Jesus is saying. Literally, it is Isaiah 43 talking to them. "It isn't any stranger among you. You yourself are my witnesses. It is the Lord who speaks. And I, I am your God. I am he from eternity. No one

can deliver from my hand. I act and no one can reverse it". The Word of God was literally talking to them. The scriptures were being fulfilled under their very eyes. They couldn't believe that the grace was so great. That was one of the problems they had. Jesus is telling them face to face what Isaiah told them indirectly, that the privilege is so great that they should fall on their knees and adore. Do you remember? Well, of course, we haven't come to it yet. We are going to meet something beautiful in chapter 9, and that is that a very simple, lovely human being is going to say to the Lord, 'Tell me who he is'. As soon as Jesus says, I am he, he falls down and he worships him. Now, this is the reaction that John tells us that all of these people should have given to Jesus, and it is the reaction that all of us must give to him as well, because the gospel is written for us. Now is our opportunity to face the Lord coming to us in this very beautiful way.

Jesus has to tell them all of this, and the reason why he has to confront them and he has to keep giving them the testimony, is because the Lord had warned the Prophet Ezekiel in Chapter 3:1-18, "whenever you have a word from me, God said, you have to warn the people in my name. If I say to the wicked man, you are to die in your sin, and you don't warn him, if you do not speak and warn him to renounce his evil ways and so live, then if the person dies in his sin, I will hold you responsible". So, Jesus is saying to the people, 'Look, you have already been told. God has already spoken to you through the Prophet Ezekiel. I have to tell you. I must warn you. The only reason why I will show up your sinfulness is to give you an opportunity to repent and to come to life. Will they listen? No. The problem is their blindness seems to get worse by the moment. So, Jesus says to them in verse 23, "you are from below. I am from above. You are of this world. I am not of this world. I've told you already, you will die in your sins. Yes, if you do not believe that I am he. Jesus says, **Ego emi, I am the Lord.**

Thank you for listening. God bless you.