



## **John 8:21-47 - Good news and hard truths**

It may be helpful to recap the context of this conversation: it is the Feast of Tabernacles (7:2), which means the Exodus story is very much in the background. Perhaps take a minute to remind yourselves of what Jesus has been saying about himself in chapter 7 and especially 8:12-20. Note that there are some tricky verses in this passage, and it is probably best not to get hung up on them. There are notes on a couple of particular points below.

### *The Necessity of the Cross - verses 21-30*

How does Jesus describe the situation and destiny of the people he is speaking to?

What can change their destiny (v24)? Why would that have such a dramatic effect?

Why does Jesus need to be 'lifted up' (v28) before they can understand who he is?

Notes on particular verses in this section:

V21 - compare the earlier comments in 7:33-36. When Jesus says they will look for him after he is gone, he probably means that they will continue to wait for the Messiah - but to no avail, because they didn't recognise him when he came.

V24 and 28 - "I am he" is more literally "I am..." It *could* mean "I am he", but given that the 'he' is not specified here that doesn't really clarify things (as evidenced by the question in v25). Remember the Exodus background, and especially Ex 3:14. (More on this to come in 8:58).

V28 - look ahead to 12:32-33 for the meaning of 'lifted up' in John (though note that for John, Jesus's death on the cross *is* the moment of his glorification - so physically and metaphorically 'lifted up').

### *The pain of hearing the gospel - verses 31-47*

Who is Jesus talking to in these verses? Does that make their content more shocking?

What sources of security and confidence does Jesus take away from these Jewish believers? Why do you think he needs to do this?

Where might we - or people we know in and outside the church - be tempted to find our security and confidence? What might the Lord Jesus say to us?

What does it mean to be set free indeed (v36)? How can we celebrate that together?

Notes on particular verses in this section:

V44 - this could easily be read, and sometimes has been read, in an anti-Semitic way, as if Jesus were saying that the Jews uniquely had the devil as their father. This would be a wrong, and indeed a wicked, interpretation. When John's Gospel points out that Jesus came to his own people and was not received by them (1:11), it is clear that his own people stand for the whole world (1:10). To put it another way, if Jesus can say these things about faithful Israelites, what would he say about us as Gentiles?