

## THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

### *RISING OPPOSITION TO JESUS' MINISTRY, JOHN 5:1-12:50*

### *JESUS' MINISTRY IN JERUSALEM, JOHN 7:10-10:42*

#### INTRODUCTION

- A. Outline of the *Gospel of John* (1:1-4:42)
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### *THE WOMAN CAUGHT IN ADULTERY, JOHN 7:53-8:11*

- A. The teaching of Jesus (7:53-8:1)
1. A note concerning a story (53), ***They went each to his own house,***
    - a. Thomas Constable, *The wording of this verse suggests that the story that follows was originally the continuation of another narrative. "Everyone" apparently refers to people at a gathering in Jerusalem. This could refer to the Sanhedrin and the officers mentioned in 7:45-52. However it could also refer to other people on a different occasion.*
    - b. Leon Morris, *This verse shows that the story was originally attached to some other narrative, but what that was we can only guess.*
    - c. F. F. Bruce, *This is closely parallel to Luke's account of Jesus' procedure during Holy Week: "He spent the days teaching in the temple, and at night he went out and camped on the Mount of Olives." Holy Week, in fact, provides a suitable setting for this incident.*
  2. A note concerning Jesus' location at night and during the day(1-2), ***but Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. Early in the morning he came again to the temple. All the people came to him, and he sat down and taught them.***
    - a. Thomas Constable, *The wording of this verse suggests that the story that follows was originally the continuation of another narrative. "Everyone" apparently refers to people at a gathering in Jerusalem. This could refer to the Sanhedrin and the officers mentioned in 7:45-52. However it could also refer to other people on a different occasion.*
    - b. Edwin Blum, *Since Jesus regularly taught in the temple courts ... the people daily gathered to hear Him. As Luke wrote, "Each day Jesus was teaching at the temple, and each evening He went out to spend the night on the hill called the Mount of Olives, and all the people came early in the morning to hear Him at the temple" (Luke 21:37-38).*

- c. Leon Morris, *The Synoptic Gospels tell us that the pattern Jesus followed during the closing days of his life was to teach in Jerusalem during the day, and to retire outside the city to spend the night. Luke specifically says that he lodged on the Mount of Olives (Luke 21:37; cf. Luke 22:39). It would seem to have been one of Jesus' favorite places. On the occasion mentioned here he evidently passed the night there. The Mount of Olives is not mentioned in this Gospel, though it is in each of the other three.*
  - d. William Hendriksen, *Whether this was the eighth day of the feast or the day after we do not know ... As usual, all the people came to him. And having seated himself (contrast 7:37) he began to teach them.*
  - e. George Beasley-Murray, *The opening sentences are uncommonly reminiscent of Luke 21:37–38; they are similarly akin to the situation described in Luke 19:47–48, which finds instant illustration in Luke 20:1–2. This has confirmed many in their belief that the incident concerning the adulterous woman took place about the same time in the ministry of Jesus.*
- B. Religious leaders sought Jesus' opinion concerning a woman in their custody (3-6a)
1. The woman was an adulterer (3), ***The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery, and placing her in the midst***
    - a. Thomas Constable, *This is the only place in John's Gospel where the writer mentioned the scribes and the Pharisees together, though their association in the Synoptics is common. This is one reason that many scholars doubt that John wrote this passage. Jesus' critics brought a woman whom they claimed to have caught in the very act of committing adultery, and they placed her in the center of the group that Jesus was teaching.*
    - b. Leon Morris, *In days when writing was far from universal the scribes were members of a skilled and important profession. Among the Jews the principal study was the law, and as this was the chief interest of the Pharisees, the two groups had much in common. Accordingly it is never strange to find the two acting in conjunction. Yet we should not overlook the other fact that the Synoptic Gospels also link the scribes very often with the high priests, who were Sadducees ... Since the woman was taken in the very act, there should have been two sinners, not one, before Jesus. But if the whole thing had been engineered, provision would have been made for the man to escape.*
    - c. Edwin Blum, *According to the Law there had to be two witnesses to confirm the guilt of a person accused of a crime (Deut. 19:15). Being caught in the act of intercourse normally seems unlikely, so the religious leaders may have deliberately planned to catch her in the act. The man should have been brought in with the woman, but perhaps he had escaped. The purpose of bringing this woman before Jesus was to discredit Him as a Teacher. If He condemned her, He would lose favor with the common people. If He did not, He would be disagreeing with Moses.*
    - d. Louis Barbieri, *In light of the fact that the man involved was not brought, the Jewish leaders revealed their malicious intent and their disregard for fairness required by the law (cf. 7:50–51).*
    - e. William Hendriksen, *... It is just possible that the men who brought her before Jesus belonged to the Sanhedrin, and that they were intending to take her before that official body to be sentenced. However, the story rather leaves the impression that these religious leaders are merely using this woman as a tool, and that they are not interested in bringing her before the Sanhedrin.*
    - f. Charles Swindoll, *Having asserted His authority on matters of the law and having declared all of His actions the will of the Father, Jesus was on the spot as the scribes and Pharisees wanted to know what He would do with the woman. Of course, they didn't really care about His opinion. As on many occasions, they merely hoped to find some means of trapping Jesus with His own words (Matt. 22:15; Mark 12:13; Luke 20:20).*
  2. The leaders asked if He agreed with the Law concerning punishment for her sin (4-6a), ***they said to him, "Teacher, this woman has been caught in the act of adultery. 5 Now in the Law, Moses commanded us to stone such women. So what do you say?" This they said to test him, that they might have some charge to bring against him.***
    - a. William Hendriksen, *Their purpose clearly was this: to cause Jesus to give an answer which would be in violation of the law of Moses; next, to place this as an official charge against him; then on the basis of this charge, to have him condemned by the Sanhedrin at an official session; and finally, by branding him as a transgressor, to destroy his influence with the people.*

- b. Thomas Constable, *The Mosaic Law required that both parties involved in adultery should be stoned (Lev. 20:10; Deut. 22:22). Jesus did not challenge the scribes and Pharisees' charge, nor did He try to prove it unjust ... Jesus' critics were correct in their interpretation of the Mosaic Law (cf. Lev. 20:10; Deut. 22:22–24). However, the Jews of Jesus' day apparently did not enforce this law often, especially in urban areas. The writer said that the authorities wanted to trap Jesus into saying something that they could use against Him (cf. Matt. 22:15–22; Mark 12:13–17; Luke 20:20–26). They appear to have wanted Jesus' execution more than the woman's ... If Jesus advocated not executing the woman, the lawyers and Pharisees could charge Him with teaching the people to violate the Law. If He recommended executing her, He would contradict His own reputation for being gracious and forgiving (cf. Luke 5:20; 7:47; 19:10), and He would advocate action contrary to Roman law ... Essentially, the problem was how to reconcile justice and mercy.*
  - c. Edwin Blum, *If He condemned her, He would lose favor with the common people. If He did not, He would be disagreeing with Moses.*
  - d. George Beasley-Murray, *If the time was near the end of Jesus' ministry they would have known of his proclamation of the kingdom of God to the poor and the sinners, his compassion on the disreputable of society, and even his eating with them, thereby showing complete indifference to the ritual laws as currently understood. Well, here was a real sinner, and the Law demands that she should die for her wickedness. What does he think about it?*
- C. Jesus forcefully responded to their demand for His opinion (6b-9)
- 1. He wrote with His finger on the ground (6b), ***Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground.***
    - a. Kenneth Gangel, *Interpreters seem fascinated by Jesus' writing in the sand, certainly a reaction unexpected by the Pharisees. Why did Jesus do this? What did he write? One answer suffices for both questions: We do not know.*
    - b. Charles Swindoll, *Before the men finished their little speech, Jesus stooped over and began writing in the sand with His finger. We are left to speculate what He wrote. Whoever preserved the story obviously thought the content of His writing was less important than the act of writing.*
    - c. Leon Morris, *They wanted a legal basis on which to accuse him. Jesus' reaction was to ignore them. He simply stooped and made marks in the dust. There is no hint of why he wrote or what he wrote. It is not even certain that he wrote, for the verb used can mean "to draw." But in this context the word more naturally signifies "to write." A not unlikely suggestion is that Jesus wrote the words he later spoke.*
    - d. Thomas Constable, *This is the only mention of Jesus writing that appears in the New Testament, along with verse 8 ... There have been several suggestions about what Jesus may have written in the dust, all of which are guesses: Perhaps He wrote the words of Jeremiah 17:13b: "Those who turn away on earth will be written down, because they have forsaken the fountain of living water, that is the LORD." Perhaps He wrote Exodus 23:1b: "Do not join your hand with a wicked person to be a malicious witness." Perhaps He wrote the sins of the woman's accusers. Jesus may have written the same words that He proceeded to speak, giving a visual as well as an audible decision ... If the account of this incident is complete, the writer must have felt that what Jesus wrote was secondary to His writing action, since John did not identify what He wrote. Perhaps Jesus was reminding the scribes and Pharisees that God had originally written the Ten Commandments with His finger (Exod. 31:18). Jesus' act reminds the reader of this and so suggests that Jesus is God, the Lawgiver. His writing on the ground may have symbolized His ratification of God's moral law. Another possibility is that just as God gave the Old Covenant by writing with His finger, so God (Jesus) was giving the New Covenant by writing with His finger.*
    - e. Edwin Blum, *Many have tried to guess what Jesus wrote on the ground. Some suggest He wrote the sins of the accusers. Others propose that He wrote the words of Exodus 23:1, "Do not [be] a malicious witness" ... Since it is impossible to know, any conjecture is fruitless. His response—that only one who is without sin can judge—pointed to their own sinfulness and at the same time to Himself as the only competent Judge because of His sinlessness (cf. John 8:16).*
    - f. F. F. Bruce, *Why did he stoop down and trace letters on the ground? T. W. Manson suggested that he was imitating the action of a Roman magistrate, who wrote down his sentence and then read it out aloud. If that is so, the words which he wrote would be those which he utters in verse 7. This is the only occasion on which Jesus is recorded to have written anything, and what he wrote must remain a matter of conjecture.*

- g. William Hendriksen, *It has not pleased the Lord to reveal to us whether Jesus wrote certain words or traced figures; and if the former, what he wrote, for whom he wrote, or why he wrote. Nevertheless, if an explanation is to be attempted at all, it should be in thorough keeping with the context, which, as we have seen, pictured the depths of human depravity, the depravity not so much of this woman but rather of these self-righteous and wicked scribes and Pharisees, these men with murder in their hearts, willing to use this woman as a mere tool to carry out their sinister plot against Jesus.*
- h. Grant Osborne, *Jesus' reaction is noteworthy. Still sitting (his rabbinic teaching mode), he bends over and begins writing in the dust. Much has been said about his possible message: Augustine argued that it was Jeremiah 17:13 ("Those who turn away from you will be written in the dust"); Jerome, that it was the sins of the accusers. Or perhaps it was the sentence Jesus would deliver (the Romans would write down a sentence and then read it aloud). We cannot know for certain.*
2. The leaders asked Him again and He responded (7), **And as they continued to ask him, he stood up and said to them, "Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her."**
- a. Arthur Pink, *Christ was here intimating that they, His would-be accusers, were no fit subjects to demand the enforcement of the law's sentence.*
- b. Thomas Constable, *When Jesus finally answered His critics, He cited passages in the Mosaic Law. Jesus lived under this Law and respected it. These verses required that in cases of stoning at least two witnesses of the sin, who had not participated in it, should be the first to throw the stones (Lev. 24:14; Deut. 13:9; 17:7). Jesus did not mean that the accusers needed to be sinless. The Law did not require that, but they had to be innocent of the particular sin of the accused ... Jesus meant that they needed to be free from the sin of adultery, or at least free of involvement in prearranging this woman's adultery. They had asked Him to pass judgment, and now He was exercising His rightful function as the Judge of humankind. In addition to passing judgment on the woman, He also passed judgment on her judges ... Jesus' reply put the dilemma back on His accusers' shoulders. If they proceeded to stone the woman, they were claiming that they had not sinned. If they did not stone her, they would be admitting that they had sinned. Jesus now took the place of the woman's defense attorney as well as her judge (cf. 1 John 2:1).*
- c. Edwin Blum, *His response—that only one who is without sin can judge—pointed to their own sinfulness and at the same time to Himself as the only competent Judge because of His sinlessness (cf. John 8:16).*
- d. Kenneth Gangel, *The writing in the sand was followed by the wisdom of the Son ... The perfect reply preserved both Jewish and Roman law while exposing the wickedness of the accusers.*
- e. Leon Morris, *Evidently the accusers felt that Jesus' silence arose from an inability to evade giving them the opening for which they were looking. So they pressed their question ... But Jesus stood up and invited any one among them who was sinless to throw the first stone (normally the witnesses were to initiate a stoning, Deut. 17:7). This answer completely disarmed them. It could not possibly be construed as a rejection of the law; Jesus specifically enjoined that a stone be thrown. But his limitation on who might throw it effectively prevented any harm coming to the guilty woman.*
- f. George Beasley-Murray, *If to us the symbolic action of Jesus is ambiguous, his spoken word was devastatingly clear. Its immediate application will have been to the witnesses, since in a death by stoning, they had to throw the first stones ... the word of Jesus challenged their behavior, their motives, and their life in the sight of God, and they failed the test.*
- g. Grant Osborne, *Jesus would be following Matthew 7:1–5 ("Don't judge" when you have sin in your life) and saying in effect, "Who is ready to witness against her when God's witness stands against you?"*
- h. F. F. Bruce, *We may recall Jesus' own words about the lustful look which constitutes adultery in the heart (Matthew 5:28), but more was involved in his ruling than that. The law dealt more severely with women than with men. For a betrothed or married woman to have sexual relations with a man other than her bridegroom or husband was a capital offense; for a married man to have such relations with another woman than his wife was relatively venial, provided the woman was not betrothed or married to another man. It was possible for men to maintain public respectability in spite of certain irregular incidents in their lives. Jesus' ruling therefore came as a challenge to the conscience of each man who heard him. The embarrassment was no longer his, but theirs. His ruling about adultery, like his ruling elsewhere about divorce, amounts to a redressing of the unfavorable balance in favor of the underprivileged sex. But by his appeal to the consciences of the witnesses, he takes the question off the judicial plane altogether and raises it to the moral level where it properly belongs, in accordance with his regular attitude and teaching.*

3. He again wrote on the ground (8), **And once more he bent down and wrote on the ground.**
  - a. Thomas Constable, *This is another puzzling reference. Jesus' second stooping over and writing on the ground had the result of freeing Jesus' critics from His convicting gaze ... By writing on the ground again, Jesus graciously gave the scribes and Pharisees another opportunity to rethink their decision and change their minds about what they were doing.*
  - b. Kenneth Gangel, *As Jesus began writing on the ground a second time, they had time to think about their own lives and God began to speak to those who were open to hear his voice. Again the accusers were brought face to face with the law they themselves had quoted.*
  - c. Grant Osborne, *Jesus then writes once more in the dust, probably the same message as before, to anchor their guilt before God.*
  
4. The leaders went away leaving the woman with Jesus (9), **But when they heard it, they went away one by one, beginning with the older ones, and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him.**
  - a. Thomas Constable, *The scribes and Pharisees' actions virtually confessed their guilt. Evidently the older ones among them had the most tender consciences ... Time and accumulated wisdom frequently increase one's sense of personal guilt, unless a person hardens his or her heart completely.*
  - b. Leon Morris, *Jesus stooped again and resumed his writing. But as the significance of his words sunk in, the men went out. The exodus began with the elders, who would naturally be expected to give a lead and whose greater experience would enable them to grasp more quickly the implications of Jesus' words ... But the action was not confined to them. The consciences of all were touched, and all went out. The woman was left alone. "Left" is a strong word, and might be translated "abandoned." When the force of Jesus' words struck home they were no longer interested in her sin, but in their own. They made no attempt to interfere with her, for she was left "still standing there."*
  - c. William Hendriksen, *One can almost see the accusers slink away, one by one, beginning with the eldest, until this entire crowd of scribes and Pharisees had melted away. Why did they withdraw? Was it because they had become ashamed of their own sinful condition? Or was it because they had been outgeneraled (and were now at a loss what to say or what to do), having completely failed to elicit from the lips of Jesus an answer which could form the basis of a charge against him?*
  - d. J. Vernon McGee, *When one turns on the light, all the rats, the bats, and the bedbugs crawl away.*
  - e. Kenneth Gangel, *Imagine a stage play as you watch in silence—no dialogue, no music. The confident and critical Pharisees, moments ago pointing their fingers at the woman and at Jesus, now silently exit stage right or stage left without another word. Christians are not perfect—just forgiven. And because of the extent of God's forgiveness to us, we ought to be the least judgmental people in the world.*

D. Jesus addressed the woman (10-11)

1. He asked if there were any remaining to condemn her (10), **Jesus stood up and said to her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?"**
  - a. George Beasley-Murray, *Not till the accusers had departed did Jesus address the woman, and that presumably was to put her at ease and encourage her to speak to him ...*
  - b. Leon Morris, *Jesus addresses the woman. "Woman" is not a harsh form of address. It is used by Jesus on the cross as he addresses his mother (19:26). Now he asks the adulteress where her accusers are, and goes on to inquire whether no one has condemned her.*
  - c. William Hendriksen, *Has no one condemned you? Not as if Jesus did not know! But he wished to impress upon her the great favor he had bestowed upon her. Let her revolve this in her mind and let her give expression to it; namely, that the sentence of condemnation, though demanded by the law of Moses, had not been pronounced against her by anyone.*
  - d. Thomas Constable, *Jesus' addressed the woman respectfully (cf. 2:4; 4:21; 19:26; 20:13). He asked if no one who was condemning her remained. He did not ask her if she was guilty. She may have been. As the acting judge in her case, He showed more interest in her prosecutors than in her guilt.*
  - e. Louis Barbieri, *According to the law, a person could be put to death only with two or more witnesses (8:17; Dt 17:6; 19:15). But now there were no witnesses to condemn her to be stoned to death. Jesus could fully obey the Mosaic law in releasing the woman since there were no witnesses ...*

- f. Grant Osborne, *They have all left, and the verdict is left to Jesus.*
  - g. Charles Swindoll, *The worthless judges could not condemn, and the sovereign Judge refused to condemn. He has that prerogative. True to His word, Jesus did not come to condemn the lost, but to save us (3:16–17).*
  - h. Kenneth Gangel, *With the accusers gone, there remained no condemnation. The Son of God refused to press the issue. Her sin was not just set aside; soon Jesus would pay the penalty for both the woman and her accusers.*
2. The woman said none remained to condemn her, not even Jesus (11), ***She said, “No one, Lord.” And Jesus said, “Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more.”***
- a. Thomas Constable, *Without any prosecutors, Jesus dismissed the case. This was His prerogative as her acting judge (and her future Judge). He only issued her a warning. She would have to stand before Him again in the future, but this was not the time that He wanted to pass judgment on her (cf. 3:17). He gave her mercy and time to change her ways (cf. 1:14). Thus He was not easy on sin. The ultimate reason that He could exempt her from condemnation is that He would take her condemnation on Himself and die in her place (cf. Rom. 8:1) ... This incident is further proof that Jesus was far more righteous, and much wiser, than the Jewish religious leaders who sought to kill Him. It is also another demonstration of His patience and grace with sinners.*
  - b. Darrell Bock, *This is not strictly forgiveness, because no word about forgiveness is given, but Jesus’ act is gracious in allowing her the opportunity to recover from her sin.*
  - c. Warren Wiersbe, *Law and grace do not compete with each other; they complement each other. Nobody was ever saved by keeping the Law, but nobody was ever saved by grace who was not first indicted by the Law. There must be conviction before there can be conversion.*
  - d. Edwin Blum, *Jesus’ words again reveal Him as the Master Teacher. He rebuked sin but He gave the woman hope for a new life. Theologically Jesus could forgive her sin because he has that authority (cf. Mark 2:8–12) and because He is the Lamb of God who bore “the sin of the world” (John 1:29). Besides having the divine ability to forgive her sin, His manner of dealing with her was gracious. He was revealed to her as the One who is “full of grace” (1:14).*
  - e. Leon Morris, *Jesus’ answer brings the incident to a fitting conclusion. He, too, will not condemn her. But that does not mean that he condones her sin; he tells her to sin no more ... He is calling the woman to amendment of life, the whole of life. It should not be overlooked that he says nothing about forgiveness. The guilty woman had as yet given no sign of repentance or of faith. What Jesus does is to show mercy and to call her to righteousness.*
  - f. George Beasley-Murray, *Mercy from God calls for life unto God.*
  - g. Grant Osborne, *Jesus with his omniscient awareness knew the sins she had committed. She was clearly guilty, and her life of sin had to end with this experience of God’s forgiveness.*

### SUMMARY COMMENTS

- Thomas Constable, *What if Jesus’ enemies had brought a murderer before Him? Would Jesus have said the same thing? I think not. God had made His will concerning the punishment of murderers clear in Genesis 9:5b-6, which contains the Noahic Covenant. The Mosaic Covenant continued the same policy, as does the New Covenant. The way that God has told society to deal with adultery has changed. That is why we do not execute adulterers in the church age. But the way that He has told us to deal with murderers has not changed; we are still to put them to death.*
- Kenneth Gangel, *The same Jesus offers forgiveness today to sinners whose sins equal that of the woman or those of the Pharisees. And not only forgiveness for initial salvation but also for daily sins of anger, disobedience, envy, greed, and the judgmental character shown by the Pharisees which gave birth to this episode.*
- F. F. Bruce, *Whatever textual problems are raised by this passage, “the account has all the earmarks of historical veracity.” We may safely recognize the incident as taking place in the temple precincts during Holy Week, a companion piece to those which are related in Mark 12:13–34, and especially to the incident of the tribute money.*

## INTRODUCTORY NOTES FOR JOHN 8:12-20

- Grant Osborne, *As mentioned in the previous chapter, two ceremonies were featured each day of the Festival of Tabernacles, the water ceremony each morning and the light ceremony each evening. Jesus is seen fulfilling the first in 7:37–39, and he fulfills the second in the “I am” saying here in verse 12, “I am the light of the world.”*
- Thomas Constable, *Following Jesus’ claim to be the Water of life (7:37–38), official opposition against Him intensified considerably. The following sections of this Gospel trace this rising opposition. While some people believed on Jesus, most of His own rejected Him (cf. 1:11–12). This section of the text deals with Jesus’ claim to be the Light of the world and the controversy that it generated.*
- William Barclay, *In this passage, Jesus makes the great claim: ‘I am the light of the world.’ It is very likely that the background against which he made it made that claim doubly vivid and impressive. The festival with which John connects these discourses is the Festival of Tabernacles or Booths (John 7:2) ... On the evening of its first day, there was a ceremony called the Illumination of the Temple. It took place in the Court of the Women. The court was surrounded with deep galleries, erected to hold the spectators. In the centre, four great candelabra were prepared. When the dark came, the four great candelabra were lit and, it was said, they sent such a blaze of light throughout Jerusalem that every courtyard was lit up with their brilliance ... Jesus is saying: ‘You have seen the blaze of the Temple illuminations piercing the darkness of the night. I am the light of the world, and for anyone who follows me there will be light, not only for one exciting night, but for all the pathway of life. The light in the Temple is a brilliant light, but in the end it flickers and dies. I am the light which lasts forever.’*
- Edwin Blum, *The wicks were made from the priests’ worn-out garments. The light illuminated the temple area and the people gathered to sing praises and dance. The light reminded the Jewish people of how God was with them in their wanderings in the wilderness in a pillar of cloud which turned to fire at night (Num. 9:15–23).*

## JESUS’ PROCLAMATION THAT HE IS THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD, JOHN 8:12-20

- A. Jesus is the light of the world who gives the light of life (12), **Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”**
1. Related verses
    - a. John 7:37-38, *On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. 38 Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’”*
    - b. John 1:4, *In him was life, and the life was the light of men.*
    - c. John 1:9, *The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world.*
    - d. Isaiah 42:6, *“I am the LORD; I have called you in righteousness; I will take you by the hand and keep you; I will give you as a covenant for the people, a light for the nations,*
    - e. John 12:35, *So Jesus said to them, “The light is among you for a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you. The one who walks in the darkness does not know where he is going.*
  2. Comments
    - a. Thomas Constable, *Jesus here made the second of His “I am” claims (cf. 6:35). This time He professed to be the Light of the world (cf. 1:4) ... The water of life and the bread of life metaphors represent what satisfies and sustains life. The Light of life metaphor stands for what dispels the darkness of ignorance, sin, and death. Jesus was claiming that whoever believes in (“follows”) Him will enjoy the light that comes from God’s presence and produces life.*
    - b. Louis Barbieri, *Jesus again spoke to them refers to the Pharisees (8:3, 7).*
    - c. Edwin Blum, *How fitting that during the Feast of Tabernacles, when the large lamps were burning, Jesus ... said, I am the Light of the world (cf. 1:4, 9; 12:35, 46). The world is in darkness, a symbol of evil, sin, and ignorance (Isa. 9:2; Matt. 4:16; 27:45; John 3:19). “Light” in the Bible is a symbol of God and His holiness (Acts 9:3; 1 John 1:5). Jesus is “the Light,” not merely a light or another light among many lights. He is the only Light, “the true Light” (John 1:9), for the whole world. When Jesus said, Whoever follows Me, He meant whoever believes and obeys Him (cf. 10:4–5, 27; 12:26; 21:19–20, 22). Jesus was speaking of salvation.*

- d. Warren Wiersbe, *To “follow” the Lord Jesus means to believe on Him, to trust Him; and the results are life and light for the believer. The unsaved are walking in darkness because they love darkness (John 3:17ff). One of the major messages in this Gospel is that the spiritual light is now shining, but people cannot comprehend it—and they try to put it out (John 1:4–5).*
  - e. Kenneth Gangel, *Since light is one of John’s major themes, several assumptions arise from this verse. One is that the world needs light, something John has already told us in chapter 1. There are conditions for seeing and knowing the light—following Jesus. Finally, walking in the light can be permanent. The light of life can change a person so that he or she need never again walk in darkness.*
  - f. Leon Morris, *Light is not a natural human possession. It comes only from Christ. And it is not a separable entity that may be possessed in itself. It is not an objective revelation that people may receive and hug to themselves. Jesus is the light. To have the light is to have Jesus. There is no light apart from a right relationship to him.*
  - g. George Beasley-Murray, *That the “following” takes the believer along a path that leads to the glory via Golgotha is yet to be made known (cf. 12:24–26), but the Christian reader, acquainted with the kerygma, understands that already (cf. Mark 8:34; 2 Tim 2:11–13).*
  - h. F. F. Bruce, *The two realms—of darkness and of light—are clearly distinguished. It has already been shown how the sons of light and the sons of darkness inevitably declare themselves for what they respectively are with the coming of the true light into the world (John 3:19, 21). The sons of light come to the light and follow the light. Those who will not do this must remain in the darkness, because there is no other light than the light of the world. The light which he imparts is the “light of life” because it is life giving. “With thee is the fountain of life,” says the psalmist to God; “in thy light do we see light” (Psalm 36:9).*
  - I. Grant Osborne, *Jesus’ own people had rejected him and chosen the path of darkness (1:11), but if they turned back to him they would have “the light that leads to life” (NOT). Israel was delivered by the pillar of fire, and Jesus here promises the greater deliverance to eternal life by following him as the light of God.*
- B. The Pharisees refuted Jesus’ testimony (13), ***So the Pharisees said to him, “You are bearing witness about yourself; your testimony is not true.”***
1. Related verse, John 5:31, *If I alone bear witness about myself, my testimony is not true.*
  2. Comments
    - a. Kenneth Gangel, *As we might suspect, Jesus was challenged by the Pharisees. They argued that his own self-defense was not admissible evidence. But of course it was, since he is the omniscient, impartial, and perfect Son of God.*
    - b. Leon Morris, *The leaders of the opposition to Jesus are the Pharisees. They do not address themselves to the main question. Indeed, they do not speak of light and darkness at all. Typically they fasten on a legal technicality. Jesus is bearing witness (see on 1:7) to himself, they say, and therefore his witness is “not valid.” This does not necessarily mean that it is false. They are saying that it has no legal worth. There is no reason to accept it (cf. 5:31).*
    - c. Thomas Constable, *On another occasion Jesus had said that, if He alone bore witness to His own identity, His witness would not be admissible under the Mosaic Law (5:31). The Mosaic Law required at least two witnesses, in order to guard against only one witness giving biased testimony (cf. Deut. 17:6; 19:15). The Pharisees now quoted Jesus’ statement back to Him. However, they implied that because Jesus was bearing witness about Himself, seemingly without a second corroborating witness, therefore His witness could not be true.*
    - d. George Beasley-Murray, *The reply of Jesus is unexpected: his testimony concerning himself is valid, because he knows his origin and his destiny, whereas his opponents do not. His origin and destiny, of course, are in God, from whom he comes and to whom he goes (cf. 13:3) ...*
    - e. William Barclay, *When Jesus made his claim to be the light of the world, the scribes and Pharisees reacted with hostility. That claim would sound even more astonishing to them than to us. To them it would sound like a claim—as indeed it was—to be the Messiah, and, even more, to do the work that only God could do.*

C. Jesus proclaimed why His testimony is true (14-18)

1. Jesus knows His origin (14), *Jesus answered, "Even if I do bear witness about myself, my testimony is true, for I know where I came from and where I am going, but you do not know where I come from or where I am going."*

a. Related verses

- 1) Revelation 3:14, *"And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: 'The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God's creation.'*
- 2) John 13:3, *Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going back to God,*
- 3) John 16:28, *I came from the Father and have come into the world, and now I am leaving the world and going to the Father."*
- 4) John 7:33, *Jesus then said, "I will be with you a little longer, and then I am going to him who sent me.*
- 5) John 7:28, *So Jesus proclaimed, as he taught in the temple, "You know me, and you know where I come from. But I have not come of my own accord. He who sent me is true, and him you do not know.*

b. Comments

- 1) Thomas Constable, *Jesus' witness was not false because it stood alone, even though it was insufficient under the Mosaic Law ... Jesus claimed to offer true (Gr. alethes, cf. 5:31) testimony because He knew His own origin and destiny (cf. 7:29, 33–34). His critics knew neither of these things.*
- 2) Edwin Blum, *Sometimes an individual is the only one who knows the facts about himself. And only God can give testimony to Himself. Jesus was competent to give a true witness of Himself because as God He has a comprehensive knowledge of His origin and destiny (7:29). In spite of what the Pharisees thought they knew about Jesus, they were ignorant of His heavenly origin and destiny (cf. 7:33–34), and thus were invalid judges of Him.*
- 3) Warren Wiersbe, *One of the key words in this section is witness; it is used seven times. Jesus made it clear that their witness was not dependable because their judgment was faulty. They judged on the basis of externals, mere human judgment, but He judged on the basis of spiritual knowledge. The way they judged the woman taken in adultery proved that they neither understood the Law nor their own sinful hearts.*
- 4) Leon Morris, *Here he has two points to make: the one is that he is qualified to bear witness though his enemies are not, and the other that in any case his testimony is not unsupported. The Father bears witness of him. Jesus is contrasting himself with the Pharisees. He knows both his origin and his destination, but they know neither. They are not in a position to comment on his witness.*
- 5) William Hendriksen, *... I know the facts about myself, where I came from (from heaven, from God) and where I am going (to heaven, to God). Hence when I say that I am the light of the world, this declaration is based upon my perfect self-consciousness and should, accordingly, be accepted. You, on the contrary, have no such knowledge respecting myself: but you do not know where I came from where I am going. Hence your denial of my testimony regarding myself is worthless.*
- 6) George Beasley-Murray, *The reply of Jesus is unexpected: his testimony concerning himself is valid, because he knows his origin and his destiny, whereas his opponents do not ... The testimony of Jesus therefore is grounded in his unity with the Father, from whom his revelation is derived. This has the consequence of identifying the revelation of God with the (self-) testimony of Jesus.*
- 7) Louis Barbieri, *His heavenly origin, mission in the world, and return to the Father validated His testimony. But the Pharisees did not acknowledge His glorious origin or ultimate destiny.*
- 8) Grant Osborne, *It is true that his testimony about himself is not valid in a court of law (8:14), but this was not such a court, and he was not a normal witness. As the Son of God, he says, "I know where I came from" (descended from heaven) "and where I am going" (ascending to heaven). The Pharisees' judgment is fatally flawed because once again they were reasoning from an earthly rather than a heavenly perspective—they "have no idea" regarding Jesus' origins or his final destination. This was not ignorance but willful rejection: they "suppress the truth" because their "foolish hearts were darkened" (Rom 1:18, 21).*

2. Jesus' judgment is true because He is in agreement with His Father (15-16), ***You judge according to the flesh; I judge no one. 16 Yet even if I do judge, my judgment is true, for it is not I alone who judge, but I and the Father who sent me.***
  - a. Related verses
    - 1) John 7:24, *Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment.*"
    - 2) John 12:47, *If anyone hears my words and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world.*
    - 3) John 5:30, *"I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge, and my judgment is just, because I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me.*
    - 4) John 8:29, *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.*"
  - b. Comments
    - 1) *you judge according to the flesh*
      - a) Thomas Constable, *The Pharisees were evaluating Jesus only by using the external facts about Him that they knew. They were going about the evaluation process in a typically human way (cf. 2 Cor. 5:16). Jesus used flesh (Gr. sarx) here in a metaphorical sense, meaning human nature. His critics should have considered the spiritual teaching about Jesus' identity that the Father was providing through the witness of the Old Testament, John the Baptist, and Jesus' miracles, in addition to Jesus' own testimony about Himself.*
      - b) Edwin Blum, *The Pharisees, Jesus said, judged by human standards, that is, they were limited by superficial appearances. They saw only His flesh, not His deity, so they misjudged Him.*
      - c) Leon Morris, *They judge, and they can judge, only "by human standards," more exactly "according to the flesh." Now it is the nature of the flesh to be weak and incomplete, so the expression draws attention to the weakness and imperfection of their judgment (and of all judgments like theirs). It cannot but be imperfect and partial.*
      - d) William Hendriksen, *... though you lack the necessary knowledge to judge, yet you are constantly judging me. You are doing this, moreover, according to earthly standards, according to external appearance ... So judged, I am not the light of the world but merely a countryman from Galilee, the son of Joseph.*
      - e) F. F. Bruce, *To the Pharisees he is at best "a teacher come from God" (John 3:1) and therefore not entitled to speak in his own name. They did not know his true origin or destiny. They could judge only "according to the flesh"—by outward appearance (cf. John 7:24)—and so their judgment about him was misguided.*
    - 2) *I judge no one*
      - a) Thomas Constable, *Jesus was not judging anyone at that time. That aspect of His ministry lies in the future. However, even if He did judge then, His judgment would prove right ... because in that activity as well He would be acting under, and with, the Father (cf. 5:30). As Jesus represented the Father faithfully by revealing Him, so He will represent the Father's will faithfully by judging. He did everything and will do everything with divine authority and in harmony with divine intention.*
      - b) Edwin Blum, *... Jesus did not come to judge people but to save them (3:17). When He does judge in the future, He will simply execute the Father's will according to truth and the Law (cf. 5:27, 45). He Himself will pass judgment on no one ... Jesus' judging was totally unlike theirs. Theirs was biased and limited. His was not His own because of His unique union with the Father. Nor was His witness alone; He spoke with divine authority.*
      - c) Grant Osborne, *Even though Jesus earlier spoke of himself as a judge (5:22, 30), he here returns to 3:17 and states, "I pass judgment on no one." This is not a contradiction, for Jesus did not mean in 3:17 that he never functioned as a judge but rather that he mainly came to be Savior and became Judge only for those who turned their backs on his offer of salvation. Here he is saying that he never makes superficial, human judgments the way his opponents do.*
      - d) Leon Morris, *Jesus is pointing out in the firmest manner that he does not practice the kind of judgment that the Pharisees practiced. He came for salvation, not for judgment (3:17; 12:47).*

3) *Yet even if I do judge ...*

- a) Grant Osborne, *Putting all the material on Jesus as Judge together* (3:17; 5:22, 30, 8:15–16), *we understand that Jesus did not come to judge but to save sinners, but his coming confronts people and forces them to make a faith-decision, with the result that Jesus becomes Judge for those who reject his offer of salvation. When he exercises his God-given authority to judge, he is acting in concert with his Father and as the agent of God, and his decisions are always absolutely just and right.*
- d) F. F. Bruce, ... *while they were sitting in judgment on him and his claims and reaching an adverse verdict, it was in reality he who was judging them, and judging them beyond the possibility of error because of his oneness of mind with the one who had sent him.*
- e) William Hendriksen, *I did not come to judge but to save. Yet, even if judgment is rendered inevitable because of the hardness of men's hearts, so that though I came to save I still must judge some people, my judgment is true, genuine, the real thing ... for, far from being contrary to the divine will, it is a judgment in which the Father and the Son unite.*
- d) Leon Morris, *"If I do judge" ... Jesus is continuing the thought that his judgment is unlike that of the Pharisees. It is not "according to the flesh" but "true" judgment (for "my judgment is true" N.V. has "my decisions are right"), for it arises from his relationship to the Father.*
- e) Louis Barbieri, ... *rejecting His claims invited His and His Father's judgment ... two Witnesses—Jesus and the Father—will testify and execute the final judgment.*

3. His testimony is true because he is in agreement with His Father (17-18), ***In your Law it is written that the testimony of two people is true. 18 I am the one who bears witness about myself, and the Father who sent me bears witness about me.***

a. Related verses

- 1) Numbers 35:30, *"If anyone kills a person, the murderer shall be put to death on the evidence of witnesses. But no person shall be put to death on the testimony of one witness.*
- 2) John 5:37, *And the Father who sent me has himself borne witness about me. His voice you have never heard, his form you have never seen*

b. Comments

- 1) Louis Barbieri, ... *by referring to their Law Jesus was emphasizing that, since the Law was theirs, they needed to obey it.*
- 2) Thomas Constable, *Jesus' reference to "your Law" is unusual, since in one sense it was His law. However, Jesus was in the process of setting aside the Law of Moses. The revelation that He brought superseded it, so in another sense it belonged to the Pharisees but not to Him (cf. 7:19, 51). Furthermore, by referring to their Law Jesus was emphasizing that, since the Law was theirs, they needed to obey it.*
- 3) Edwin Blum, *In your own Law may refer to Deuteronomy 17:6; 19:15 (or to Rabbinic laws), which speak of the necessity of two witnesses. In Jesus' case only God could authenticate Him. God the Son and God the Father are the required two Witnesses. The Father sent Jesus and authenticated Him by the signs (miracles) He performed.*
- 4) Leon Morris, *Jesus asserts that he has the required twofold testimony. He is emphatic. "I am" may be meant to recall the style of deity; at the very least it adds solemnity and grandeur to the statement. The two verbs expressing witness are both in continuous tenses. There is a continuing witness that Jesus bears to himself and a continuing witness that the Father bears to him ... If Jesus really stands in the relationship to God in which he says he does, then no mere human is in a position to bear witness. No human witness can authenticate a divine relationship. Jesus therefore appeals to the Father and himself, and there is no other to whom he can appeal.*
- 5) William Barclay, *There is the judgment that is based on knowledge of all the facts, even the hidden facts, and that can belong only to God. Jesus claims that any judgment he passes is not a human one; it is God's—because he is one with God. Therein lies at once our comfort and our warning. Only Jesus knows all the facts. That makes him merciful as no other can ever be; but it also enables him to see the sins in us which are hidden from the eyes of others. The judgment of Jesus is perfect because it is made with the knowledge which belongs to God.*
- 6) Grant Osborne, *Jesus' witness to himself transcends the legalistic Pharisaical brand of Torah interpretation because, as the divinely appointed envoy of God, he who is the Son of God and on mission from his Father has an authority that transcends that of earth-centered interpreters of Torah like the Pharisees.*

D. Jesus responded to their question concerning His Father (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.”**

1. Related verses

- a. John 8:55, *But you have not known him. I know him. If I were to say that I do not know him, I would be a liar like you, but I do know him and I keep his word.*
- b. John 16:3, *And they will do these things because they have not known the Father, nor me.*
- c. John 14:7, *If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.”*

2. Comments

- a. Thomas Constable, *The Pharisees virtually admitted here, by their revealing question, that they did not know Jesus’ origins—even though they had claimed that they knew where Jesus came from earlier (7:27). Their inability to recognize Jesus as the Son of God showed that they really did not know God. If they had known God, they would have recognized Jesus as His Son. The rest of chapter 8 deals with the theme of fatherhood.*
- b. William Barclay, *... Jesus bluntly told the scribes and Pharisees that they had no real knowledge of God. The fact that they did not recognize him for who and what he was provided the proof that they did not. The tragedy was that the whole history of Israel had been designed so that the Jews should recognize the Son of God when he came; but they had become so involved with their own ideas, so intent on their own way, so sure of their own conception of what religion was that they had become blind to God.*
- c. Edwin Blum, *Jesus’ teaching on God as His Father was unique (cf. 5:18), and the Jews were puzzled by His familiar way of talking about Him. The Pharisees asked Him, Where is Your Father? Was He talking about God, or (as they supposed) His human father? Their ignorance of Jesus showed their ignorance of God, for Jesus is the Revelation of the Father (cf. 1:14, 18; 14:7, 9).*
- d. Leon Morris, *Not unnaturally the Jews want to know where this Father of whom Jesus speaks is. Jesus’ reply indicates that the Father is inaccessible to them. It is possible to know the Father only as we know Jesus, for Jesus is the revelation of the Father. It is a key doctrine of this Gospel that it is in the Son, and in the Son alone, that the Father is revealed. No one has ever seen God. It is the Son who has “made him known” (1:18). This is fundamental.*
- e. William Hendriksen, *The Jews, who had rejected the testimony of the Son, now also reject the testimony of the Father ... They clearly indicate that Christ’s teaching with reference to the Father had fallen on deaf ears. The Pharisees were engaged in the most dangerous activity found among men: they were hardening their hearts! Such hardening results in total blindness and ignorance.*
- f. George Beasley-Murray, *Since they are incapable of recognizing in Jesus the one sent of God, it is deduced that they know neither him nor the Father. “As in 5:37, the claim is made that when men shut themselves off from Jesus’ witness it is a sign that God has shut himself off from them” ...*
- g. Grant Osborne, *There was no way that the Pharisees could ever accept Jesus’ claim that God was his Father, so their question in verse 19 is a natural one: “Where is your father?” Philip makes a similar error in 14:8, when he tells Jesus, “Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.” Both he and the Pharisees spoke from an earthly understanding, and not even Philip could comprehend Jesus’ claim that his Father is in heaven and that is his place of origin.*

E. The Pharisees did not attempt to arrest Him in the treasury (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.**

1. Related verses

- a. Matthew 27:6, *But the chief priests, taking the pieces of silver, said, “It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, since it is blood money.”*
- b. John 7:30, *So they were seeking to arrest him, but no one laid a hand on him, because his hour had not yet come.*
- c. John 7:8, *You go up to the feast. I am not going up to this feast, for my time has not yet fully come.”*

## 2. Comments

- a. Louis Barbieri, *The Court of Women was the temple area in which all Jews including women (but no Gentiles) could gather.*
- b. F. F. Bruce, *It was in this neighborhood, “opposite the treasury,” that Jesus sat on the occasion during Holy Week when he saw the widow put her two “mites” into one of the containers (Mark 12:41–44).*
- c. Thomas Constable, *The Jews apparently called the Court of the Women, “the treasury,” because it contained 13 shopfar (ram’s horn) shaped receptacles for the Jews’ monetary offerings (cf. Mark 12:41–42). Each one bore an inscription showing how the priests would use the gifts deposited in them ... The last part of verse 20 makes the point that, if they could have, these leaders would have arrested and executed Jesus immediately. However, it was not yet God’s time for His Son to die (cf. 2:4; 7:6, 30). Thus John again stressed the Father’s sovereign control over the events that shaped Jesus’ ministry.*
- d. William Hendriksen, *Here Jesus was teaching, in the immediate proximity of the hall in which the Sanhedrin held (or: used to hold) its sessions. And, though it is possible that this August body, so thoroughly hostile to Jesus, could almost hear the echo of his voice, no one arrested him ...*
- e. Edwin Blum, *No one seized (piazo, “arrested”) Him (cf. John 7:30, 32, 44, 10:39) because, as John repeatedly pointed out, Jesus was working on God’s time schedule to accomplish the Father’s will (cf. 2:4; 7:6, 30; 12:23, 27; 13:1; 17:1).*
- f. Warren Wiersbe, *Their further attempts to arrest Jesus were again thwarted by the Father, for it was not yet our Lord’s hour when He should give His life. When the servant of God is in the will of God, he can have courage and peace as he does his duty.*
- g. Leon Morris, *Following the open enmity between the Pharisees and Jesus an arrest might have been expected. John explains that its failure to materialize was due, not to any lack of desire or opportunity, but to the will of God.*

### SUMMARY

- Thomas Constable, *The main point of this section is the increasing animosity that the Jewish leaders felt and expressed toward Jesus.*
- F. F. Bruce, *The arrest, trial and execution, when at last their time came, were but stages on his return journey to the one who had sent him into the world.*

### INTRODUCTION FOR JOHN 8:21-30

- Thomas Constable, *Jesus began to contrast Himself with His critics ... Evidently what follows continues Jesus’ teaching in the temple when He spoke the words that John recorded in the preceding verses. The Greek word palin (“again”) indicates a pause, but not a significant break in the narrative (cf. v. 12). The content of His teaching in this verse recalls 7:33–34.*
- Leon Morris, *John is all the time writing of one who stands in a unique relationship to the Father, one who is the supreme revelation of the Father. In this passage this relationship is the dominating thought.*
- William Barclay, *This is one of the passages of argument and debate so characteristic of the Fourth Gospel and so difficult to elucidate and to understand. In it, various strands of argument are all woven together.*
- Grant Osborne, *This is a severe warning regarding the terrible destiny awaiting those who refuse to believe. Jesus establishes a series of oppositions between himself and these Jewish opponents. He is from above, they are from below. He is not from this world, they are of this world. His destiny is not theirs. His father is God, theirs is the devil.*

## CONFUSION CONCERNING WHO JESUS IS, JOHN 8:21-30

- A. Jesus said there is a difference between them and Him (21-24)
1. Jesus warned them concerning their sins, (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.”**
    - a. Related verses
      - 1) John 14:28, *You heard me say to you, ‘I am going away, and I will come to you.’ If you loved me, you would have rejoiced, because I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I.*
      - 2) John 7:34, *You will seek me and you will not find me. Where I am you cannot come.”*
      - 3) John 8:24, *I told you that you would die in your sins, for unless you believe that I am he you will die in your sins.”*
    - b. Comments
      - 1) William Barclay, *Jesus begins by telling his opponents that he is going away; and that, after he is gone, they will realize what they have missed, and will search for him and not find him. This is the true prophetic note. It reminds us of three things. (1) There are certain opportunities which come and which do not return. To each of us is given the opportunity to accept Christ as Saviour and Lord; but that opportunity can be refused and lost. (2) Implicit in this argument is the truth that life and time are limited. It is within an allotted span that we must make our decision for Christ. The time we have to make that decision is limited—and none of us knows what that limit is. There is therefore every reason for making it now. (3) Just because there is opportunity in life, there is also judgment. The greater the opportunity, the more clearly it beckons, the more frequently it comes, the greater the judgment if it is refused or missed. This passage brings us face to face with the glory of our opportunity and with the limitation of time in which to seize it.*
      - 2) F. F. Bruce, *Again Jesus makes a statement which his hearers cannot quite grasp. Their uncomprehending response to it then provides him with an opportunity to explain it and apply it to their condition. The incarnate Word is to be on earth in a visible form for a limited period only. This limited period is their opportunity. If they accept him for what he is, then they will receive the right to become God’s children, and eternal life will be theirs. But if they let the opportunity slip, it will not recur. The time of his visible presence with them will have passed, and they will seek him after that in vain. Instead of enjoying eternal life through faith in him, they will die in their sin—without having their sin removed.*
      - 3) Thomas Constable, *When Jesus said that He was going away, He was speaking of His death, resurrection, and ascension into heaven. The Jewish leaders would not seek Jesus personally, but they would continue to search for the Messiah. They would die in their sin (singular) of unbelief because they rejected Jesus. Jesus was going to His Father in heaven. These Jews could not come there because they had rejected Jesus.*
      - 4) Edwin Blum, *Just as His time was short, so their opportunity for trusting in Him was limited. Soon He would go back to His Father and they could not follow Him there (cf. 7:33–34). You will die in your sin. The singular “sin” is that of rejecting the One who offers salvation (cf. 16:9). They would “die” because they continued living in the realm of sin, remaining under its power. Physical death would be their prelude to eternal separation from God.*
      - 5) Warren Wiersbe, *They were wasting their God-given opportunities by arguing with Him instead of trusting Him; and one day soon, their opportunities would end.*
      - 6) Leon Morris, *Jesus begins by telling the Jews that he will leave them and that they will not be able to follow him where he goes ... The words are mysterious, but we need not doubt that Jesus is referring once more to his departure to be with the Father. His death is set in contrast to theirs. They will die in their sin, and this will prevent them from going where he goes ... Dying in sin is not further defined ... It points to a horror that is all the more terrible for being unexplained. To die with one’s sin unrepented and unatoned is the supreme disaster ...*
      - 7) William Hendriksen, *In their death they will experience no comfort and no peace of any kind, only dark despair. The One whom they have rejected will not be present to help them in their need ... The wrath of God resting upon them, they will go to the place of everlasting perdition. They cannot go where Jesus is going; namely, to the Father.*

- 8) George Beasley-Murray, *This represents the opposite of what is proclaimed in 8:12; whereas followers of the Christ walk in the Light, in possession of and with hope for the eternal life of the kingdom of God, unbelievers walk in the darkness of this age to “death,” i.e., exclusion from the kingdom of God.*
  - 9) Louis Barbieri, *One has only until death to believe in Christ for eternal life (Heb 9:27).*
  - 10) Grant Osborne, *... he says to them that they will die in their sins because they will never receive the effects of Jesus’ atoning sacrifice. They will never accompany Jesus to his final heavenly destination because the only path to heaven is faith (3:16; 5:24, 38; 6:35, 47; 7:38) ... These enemies of Christ will never be able to go.*
2. The Jews misunderstood where Jesus was going (22), ***So the Jews said, “Will he kill himself, since he says, ‘Where I am going, you cannot come?’”***
- a. Related verse, John 7:35, *The Jews said to one another, “Where does this man intend to go that we will not find him? Does he intend to go to the Dispersion among the Greeks and teach the Greeks?”*
  - b. Comments
    - 1) Thomas Constable, *Jesus’ hearers wondered if He was speaking about taking His own life. In 7:34–35, they wondered if He was talking about going on a mission to the Gentile world. In both cases, they did not grasp that Jesus was speaking of spiritual, rather than physical, spheres of reality. However, these people again spoke better than they realized. Jesus’ departure would involve His death, not as a suicide but as a sacrifice for sin. Consequently their words here are an ironic prophecy of Jesus’ death (cf. 11:49–50).*
    - 2) Warren Wiersbe, *They thought He was planning to kill Himself! Suicide was an abhorrent thing to a Jew, for the Jews were taught to honor all life. If Jesus committed suicide, then He would go to a place of judgment; and this, they reasoned, was why they could not follow Him.*
    - 3) George Beasley-Murray, *That Jesus might kill himself would, in Jewish thought, put him beyond “finding,” since the suicide goes to “darkest Hades” (so Jos., BJ, 3.375; Jewish teachers deduced from Gen 9:5 that God would “require” of the suicide his own blood).*
    - 4) William Barclay, *When Jesus spoke about going away, he was speaking about his return to his Father and to his glory. That was precisely where his opponents could not follow him, because by their continuous disobedience and their refusal to accept him they had shut themselves off from God. His opponents met his words with a grim and mocking jest. Jesus said that they could not follow where he went; and they suggested that perhaps he was going to kill himself. The point is that, according to Jewish thought, the depths of hell were reserved for those who took their own lives.*
3. Jesus proclaimed that He came from outside this world (23), ***He said to them, “You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world.***
- a. Related verses
    - 1) John 3:31, *He who comes from above is above all. He who is of the earth belongs to the earth and speaks in an earthly way. He who comes from heaven is above all.*
    - 2) 1 John 4:5, *They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them.*
    - 3) John 17:14, *I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.*
  - b. Comments
    - 1) Thomas Constable, *Jesus explained their reason for misunderstanding Him as being traceable to their origin. Jesus was from God above, whereas they came from His fallen and rebellious creation below. The second contrast in this verse clarifies the first. To understand Jesus’ meaning, His hearers needed new birth (3:3, 5) and the Father’s illumination (6:45).*
    - 2) Warren Wiersbe, *The reason Jesus and the Jewish leaders were going to different destinations was because they had different origins: Jesus came from heaven, but they belonged to the earth. Jesus was in the world, but He did not belong to the world (see John 17:14–16).*

- 3) William Hendriksen on *I am*, *The meaning is: that I am all that I claim to be; the One sent by the Father, the One who is from above, the Son of man, the only-begotten Son of God, equal with God, the One who has life in himself, the very essence of the scriptures, the bread of life, the light of the world, etc. The fact that rejection of the Son—failure to believe in him and to obey him—results in everlasting death is expressed not only here in 8:24 but also in 3:36.*
  - 4) Louis Barbieri, *Their origin explained their discrepancies with Jesus (v. 23): from below versus from above, and of this world (the natural, sinful, human realm) versus not of this world, but sent from the Father.*
  - 5) William Barclay, *There is something wrong with the world—anyone can see that. Only recognition of Jesus Christ as the Son of God, obedience to his perfect wisdom and acceptance of him as Saviour and Lord can cure the individual soul and cure the world ... We are only too well aware of the disease which haunts and wrecks the world; the cure lies before us. The responsibility is ours if we refuse to accept it.*
  - 6) F. F. Bruce, *Those who belong to the lower realm cannot by themselves make the journey to the upper realm; they cannot even grasp the language of the upper realm. “What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit” (John 3:6). The only possibility for those of the lower realm to be transferred to the upper realm is if someone descends from the upper to the lower realm and then “ascends back where he was before” (John 6:62), opening up a way—indeed, himself constituting the way—by which others may ascend there too (John 14:6).*
4. Jesus declared the importance of placing faith in Him (24), ***I told you that you would die in your sins, for unless you believe that I am he you will die in your sins.***
- a. Related verses
    - 1) 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.”*
    - 2) John 16:9, *concerning sin, because they do not believe in me;*
    - 3) Mark 13:6, *Many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am he!’ and they will lead many astray.*
    - 4) Luke 21:8, *And he said, “See that you are not led astray. For many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am he!’ and, ‘The time is at hand!’ Do not go after them.*
  - b. Comments
    - 1) Thomas Constable, *Only belief in Him could rescue them from this fate. Here Jesus viewed their many sins (plural) as the consequences of their sin (singular, v. 21) of unbelief ... Jesus’ hearers needed to believe that He was “I am” ... Jesus was alluding to the title that God gave Himself in the Old Testament (Exod. 3:14; Deut. 32:39; Isa. 41:4; 43:10, 13, 25; 46:4; 48:12). Essentially “I am” means the eternally self-existent being. Unless a person believes that Jesus is God, in contrast with less than God, he or she will die in his or her sins.*
    - 2) Merrill Tenney, *The attitude of unbelief is not simply unwillingness to accept a statement of fact; it is resistance to the revelation of God in Christ.*
    - 3) Edwin Blum, *If they would reject the Sin-Bearer (1:29), they would continue in the realm of sin. If they would reject Jesus as the revelation of God, they would miss their only hope for salvation. I am the One I claim to be in Greek is the enigmatic “I Am,” which is a self-designation for God ...*
    - 4) Leon Morris, *It is impossible to have the kind of faith John envisages without having a high view of Christ. Unless we believe that he is more than just another man we can never trust him with that faith which is saving faith.*
    - 5) William Hendriksen, *This death in sins will be the result of not believing that I am he ... Basic to the expression are passages such as Ex. 3:14; Deut. 32:39; Is. 43:10.*
    - 6) Louis Barbieri, *Jesus applied the words of God’s self-identification in the OT to Himself.*
    - 7) William Barclay, *There is something wrong with the world—anyone can see that. Only recognition of Jesus Christ as the Son of God, obedience to his perfect wisdom and acceptance of him as Saviour and Lord can cure the individual soul and cure the world.*

- B. Jesus answered their question concerning who He is (25-29)
1. They asked Jesus who He is and He gave a response (25-26), **So they said to him, “Who are you?” Jesus said to them, “Just what I have been telling you from the beginning. 26 I have much to say about you and much to judge, but he who sent me is true, and I declare to the world what I have heard from him.”**
    - a. Related verses
      - 1) John 1:19, *And this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, “Who are you?”*
      - 2) John 3:33, *Whoever receives his testimony sets his seal to this, that God is true.*
      - 3) John 7:28, *So Jesus proclaimed, as he taught in the temple, “You know me, and you know where I come from. But I have not come of my own accord. He who sent me is true, and him you do not know.*
    - b. Comments
      - 1) *So they to said to him, “Why are you?”*
        - a) Thomas Constable, *Jesus’ hearers did not understand what He meant at first, and now being quite confused, they asked Him: “Who are You?” Jesus responded that He was saying nothing different from what He had been saying about His identity since the beginning of His ministry ... “I am” was a new title, but it represented revelation that was consistent with what Jesus had always claimed about Himself.*
        - b) Grant Osborne, *Pretty much everything Jesus has said in this Gospel thus far has gone right over their heads because they have read their earthly way of thinking into all the heaven-centered truth they have been told. This is no different.*
        - c) Edwin Blum, *This revelation of Jesus as “I Am” only confused the Jews. And His words about their sins probably angered them.*
        - d) Leon Morris, *It is unlikely that the Jews perceived the full implications of Jesus’ words. There is mystery in them, and the mystery is open only to faith. But they caught enough to discern that Jesus was making a large claim, and the outrageousness of this claim (as it seemed to them) caused them to explode into the question, “Who are you?”*
        - e) William Hendriksen, *Once again, as in verse 22, the Jews act as if they have not heard the remarks of Jesus with reference to themselves. Probably thinking that the best defence is an offense, they attack him with an expression of scorn and ridicule: “You, who are you?” ...*
      - 2) *Just what I have been telling you from the beginning ...*
        - a) Edwin Blum, *Who are You? they asked. He replied, Just what I have been claiming all along ... Jesus could have said much more and even condemned His hearers, but His purpose in coming was to give them and the world the message from the One who sent Him. This message is certainly true because the Sender is reliable (cf. 7:18, 28).*
        - b) Leon Morris, *The meaning of Jesus’ answer is not clear ... Perhaps “What I told you at the beginning” is as good a rendering of the Greek as we can get.*
        - c) William Hendriksen, *Clearly, Jesus is not going to be sidetracked. He answers their derisive question very pointedly and very briefly, and then immediately continues the attack upon them begun in verses 21, 23, and 24. Their question (You, who are you?) was not only wicked; it was also entirely uncalled for and superfluous, for Jesus had been telling them all the while who he was (see on verse 24) and he was engaged in doing that very thing now.*
        - d) William Barclay, *There is no verse in all the New Testament more difficult to translate than John 8:25 ... It is suggested ... ‘Everything I am saying to you now is only a beginning.’ If we take it like that, the passage goes on to say that the real meaning of Christ will be seen in three ways ... (1) It will be seen in the cross ... (2) It will be seen in the Judgment ... (3) When that happens, the embodied will of God will be seen in him.*

3) *I have much to say about you and much to judge ...*

- a) Leon Morris, *Then Jesus goes on to point out that he has many things to say “about” (not “to”) them, and that these things concern judgment. Judgment is necessarily involved in all right teaching and action, and preeminently is this the case where the mission of the Son is concerned. In his function as Judge of us all he cannot overlook such conduct as that of his antagonists. But the right place and the right time to say such things are not yet. There are things that Jesus says now, and a consideration of them leads to his close connection with the Father ... His message is to “the world”; it is not restricted in its scope.*
- b) Thomas Constable, *Jesus also claimed to have much more to reveal to His hearers, regardless of its immediate effect. Part of that would involve judgment for their unbelief. However, all of what He would say would be true, because it would come from God (“He who sent Me”). It would not be simply His own words spoken independent of the Father (cf. 3:34; 5:19–30; 8:15–16).*
- c) William Hendriksen, *Perhaps the thought of verse 26 fully expressed might be reproduced in these words: “I have many things to say concerning you and to judge. But, in spite of your vehemently uttered rejections and your manifestations of unbelief, what I shall say is true because he who sent me is true, and whatsoever I have heard from him, these things I speak to the world.” ... What Jesus has heard (from all eternity) from the Father, these things he utters not only to the Jews but to Jew and Gentile alike; they are meant for all, for the entire world ...*
- d) George Beasley-Murray, *... he has “many things” to say about the Jews, and to judge, i.e., to show their wrong and their guilt, and he will continue to tell them what he hears from him who sent him to them (v 26).*
- e) Louis Barbieri, *The phrase ‘to speak and to judge’ (v. 26) is best translated as a hendiadys [the expression of a single idea by two words connected with “and”], “I have many things to speak in judgment concerning you.*
- f) F. F. Bruce, *Far from being reluctant to speak to them “at all,” Jesus assures them that he has much to say to them and about them—much to say by way of judgment. The judgment here consists in his declaration of the truth, so that the deficiencies of their beliefs and practices may be exposed by its light. The truth which he declares is not something that he himself has thought up; it has been entrusted to him by the one who sent him. As the Son can do nothing on his own initiative, but only what he sees the Father doing (John 5:19), so the Son can teach nothing on his own initiative, but only what he is told by the Father.*
- g) Grant Osborne, *Still, he has a great deal to add, but they won’t enjoy hearing it, for it is all “in judgment of you” (v. 26). They have not truly listened before and have rejected what they heard. So his message will be one of condemnation due to their unbelief (5:45–47; 6:26–27, 41–42, 52; 7:7, 34). Most importantly, Jesus is not just speaking for himself, but his message stems from the one “who sent me,” and so what he says will be completely trustworthy.*

2. They did not realize He was identifying Himself with His Heavenly Father (27), ***They did not understand that he had been speaking to them about the Father.***

- a. Related verse, John 8:18, *I am the one who bears witness about myself, and the Father who sent me bears witness about me.”*
- b. Comments
  - 1) Thomas Constable, *John clarified for his readers that Jesus had been speaking about His Father when He mentioned the One who sent Him. John did not want his readers to suffer from the same confusion as those who originally listened to Jesus did. Jesus had explained earlier that it was God the Father who had sent Him (5:16–30).*
  - 2) Matthew Henry, *Though Christ spoke so plainly of God as his Father in heaven, yet they did not understand whom he meant. Day and night are alike to the blind.*
  - 3) Edwin Blum, *John added that the people did not understand that Jesus was referring to the Father. God was unknown to them so they missed Jesus (cf. 1:18).*

- 4) William Hendriksen, *Even though Jesus had frequently told the Jews in clear language that the Sender was the Father (cf. 5:36, 37; 8:18), yet this fact had failed to register. So blinding is the power of infidelity and prejudice! We do not know by what means they indicated this ignorance. Perhaps they showed it by raising an objection or asking a stupid question or staring vacantly.*
  - 5) F. F. Bruce, *“They did not recognize that he was saying that God was his Father.” Such a claim from him had enraged them on the former occasion (John 5:18), but perhaps because this time he used the periphrasis “he who sent me,” instead of saying “my Father,” the claim was not so explicit. But John’s readers have learned enough by this time to know very well what Jesus means.*
3. Jesus gave confirming proofs of His identity (28-29), **So Jesus said to them, “When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just 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.”**

a. Related verses

- 1) John 3:14, *And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up,*
- 2) John 12:32, *And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.”*
- 3) John 12:34, *So the crowd answered him, “We have heard from the Law that the Christ remains forever. How can you say that the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?”*
- 4) John 8:24, *I told you that you would die in your sins, for unless you believe that I am he you will die in your sins.”*
- 5) John 5:30, *“I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge, and my judgment is just, because I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me.*
- 6) John 7:16, *So Jesus answered them, “My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me.*

b. Comments

- 1) *When you have lifted up the Son of Man ...*
  - a) Leon Morris, *This concept of the death on the cross of one who was one with the Father is the great central thought of this Gospel.*
  - b) Edwin Blum, *Jesus was now unknown to them. Only the Crucifixion (when the Son of Man would be lifted up; cf. 3:14; 12:32) would enable them to see Him for who He really is.*
  - c) Thomas Constable, *Lifting up (Gr. hypsoo) the Son of Man refers to His crucifixion, which John viewed as His exaltation (cf. 3:14; 12:23). However some interpreters believe it refers to both His crucifixion and His elevation to the messianic throne. The title Son of Man is messianic (Dan. 7:13–14), with emphasis on His perfect humanity. Jesus’ enemies would lift Him up. When they did, they would realize that Jesus was the self-existent God. Jesus did not mean that His crucifixion would convince all of His critics regarding His true identity, but that exaltation would be the key to many of them believing on Him (cf. 12:32).*
  - d) Warren Wiersbe, *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).*
  - e) Kenneth Gangel, *The phrase lifted up the Son of Man refers to the way a body was placed on the cross and the cross elevated in public on a hill of execution. Often we pray that Jesus will be “lifted up,” meaning we wish him to be exalted and glorified. But in John this terminology distinctly refers to the cross ... When we pray that Jesus will be lifted up, meaning “exalted” and “glorified,” we must remember that has already happened at Calvary, where he achieved glorification through his death and following resurrection.*
  - f) Leon Morris, *John probably uses it [lifted up] to convey a double meaning. Jesus was “lifted up” on the cross, and he was also exalted in a deeper sense, for his greatest glory consists in accepting the shame and the humiliation of the cross in order that thereby he might bring salvation to sinners. Here he is saying that the Jews will not understand who he really is before they have crucified him.*

- g) William Hendriksen, *The clause “then you will know that I am he” is not a prediction of salvation for the Jews. The knowledge here indicated is not a saving knowledge and does not refer to the conversion of the three thousand on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:36, 41). The present context does not allow that interpretation (see especially verses 21 and 24). What Jesus means is that having refused to accept him by faith and having nailed him to the cross (which, in turn, led to the crown), they would one day awaken to the terrifying realization that this One whom they despised was, nevertheless, whatever he claimed to be. Too late this truth would crash in upon them, in the hour of death and at the final judgment.*
  - h) Charles Swindoll, *The “lifting up” is, of course, a reference to Jesus’ crucifixion, a prediction he made to Nicodemus perhaps as long as two years earlier (3:14–15).*
  - i) F. F. Bruce, *The cross is the complete revelation of the divine glory manifested in the Son ... Jesus came into the world to reveal the Father, and he revealed him most fully in his death on the cross ... Of course, even the cross and resurrection would not convince them all that the crucified one was the revealer of the Father, but if that would not convince them, nothing would.*
- 2) *I do nothing on my own authority ...*
- a) Thomas Constable, *Jesus again affirmed that everything He said came from and with the authority of His Father (cf. vv. 16, 18, 26). All that He said and did was the Father’s will, including the Cross. Jesus continually expressed His dependence on the Father, and He gloried in the Father’s presence with Him (cf. 3:34; 5:30; 6:38; 8:16; et al.).*
  - b) Edwin Blum, *Jesus’ union with the Father is one of love and continual obedience (cf. 4:34; 5:30). Though people reject Jesus, the Father will never abandon Him. Jesus is never alone, and even on the cross the Father glorified Him (cf. 16:32; 17:5).*
  - c) Warren Wiersbe, *... not only was He sent by the Father, but the Father was with Him because He always did what pleased the Father (John 8:29).*
  - d) Leon Morris, *He does not act as an isolated individual. He does nothing on his own initiative. He repeats from verse 26 that what he says to people is what God has spoken to him. His message is not of human origin, but divine ... This is followed by a statement of the intimate communion that always exists between Jesus and the Father. Again there is the thought of mission (this is the fourth reference to his being “sent” in this discourse; see also vv. 16, 18, 26). It is he who sent Jesus who is with him, and this may perhaps be regarded as part of the consequence of the sending. God does not and will not forsake his messenger.*
  - e) William Hendriksen, *In that passage the Son is forsaken in a twofold sense: a. all alone he bears the burden of God’s wrath against sin, no one shares his punishment; and b. while experiencing within himself that indescribable torture, he must forego the consoling sweetness of the Father’s fellowship. Nevertheless, because of his voluntary acceptance of this eternal death the Father loves him all the more!*
  - f) F. F. Bruce, *His “lifting up” would be his vindication; then it would be manifest that he had acted and spoken throughout by the Father’s authority. “As the Father has taught me, so I speak ... I always do the things that are pleasing to him.” Even now, the ever-present awareness of this vindication gave him confidence. More than that, he had the assurance of the Father’s constant presence and approval. In all that he did, the Father was with him.*
  - g) Grant Osborne, *He was soon to die the most horrible and shameful death imaginable, yet he was supremely at peace with it all. Why? Because “the one who sent me is with me.” Jesus will go to the cross alone. His twelve disciples will run away in fear (Mark 14:50 and parallels), but Jesus’ reply will be, “A time is coming and in fact has come when you will be scattered.... You will leave me all alone. Yet I am not alone, for my Father is with me” (John 16:32).*

C. Many responded by believing in Jesus (30), *As he was saying these things, many believed in him.*

1. Related verse, John 7:31, *Yet many of the people believed in him. They said, “When the Christ appears, will he do more signs than this man has done?”*
2. Comments
  - a. Thomas Constable, *John noted that in spite of the confusion of many that resulted from Jesus’ teaching, many others believed on Him because of these words (cf. 7:31). God opened their understanding with Jesus’ illuminating and life-giving words.*
  - b. Edwin Blum, *In spite of widespread unbelief and official rejection, the ministry of Jesus did bring many to faith (cf. 7:31). Yet this faith would need to be tested and refined. The words many put their faith in Him contrast with the next verse. Though large numbers of people responded to Jesus, many people fell away.*
  - c. Leon Morris, *John briefly gives us the result of all this. As Jesus was speaking these things, many came to put their trust in him ... We are not told who the “many” were. They may have come from the opponents who disputed with Jesus, or they may have been bystanders. But they caught enough of the significance of all this to take their stand with Jesus.*
  - d. Louis Barbieri, *The words of Jesus (As He spoke these things) led many Jewish people (v. 30) to believe in Him (pisteuo eis, John’s unique phrase for genuine faith; 1:12; 3:16, 18, 36; 6:40; 11:25, 26).*
  - e. Charles Swindoll, *The discourses preserved by John represent numerous instances in which Jesus became a target for the religious leaders’ wrath after proclaiming the truth. John, however, inserts a subtle editorial note to reassure the reader. While Jesus’ opposition remained steadfast in their rebellion, some people believed.*
  - d. F. F. Bruce, *Such was the power with which he spoke that many of his hearers were convinced by his words without waiting for the final evidence of his “lifting up.” On an earlier occasion in Jerusalem many believed because of the signs which he performed (John 2:23). The faith which was called forth by his words may well have been more firmly founded than that which was based on the signs.*

### SUMMARY

- Grant Osborne, *When we face opposition and trials of all kinds, we need to be aware of God’s presence, as in Romans 8:31: “If God is for us, who can be against us?” ... The Christian life is a two-way street—we seek at all times to please God (Rom 12:1–2, “offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God”), and God is always at our side watching over us and strengthening us ... this One is both God and Savior, who will go to the cross all alone and will have no one to hold him up. But he will not be alone because his Father will be alongside him at every step. This is an immense comfort to us, for it tells us that we too will never be alone.*
- Warren Wiersbe, *Salvation is a matter of life or death. People who live in their sins and reject the Saviour 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.*
- Kenneth Gangel, *As God’s children through faith in the Savior, we can say with Jesus, The one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone.*

### INTRODUCTION FOR JOHN 8:31-47

- Thomas Constable, *Jesus next addressed those in His audience who had expressed some faith in Him (v. 30).*
- Edwin Blum, *Though large numbers of people responded to Jesus, many people fell away.*
- Kenneth Gangel, *Saving faith must center in Jesus himself, not just his miracles or some teaching about him. The remainder of this chapter tells us how truth will set us free from false faith, faith in inadequate but attractive objects that often clamor for our attention—relationships, religion, and righteousness.*
- Time must be spent in determining who Jesus is addressing in this section. Verse 31 speaks of the “many who had believed in Him,” in verse 30 and those who proclaimed “We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone” in verse 33.

## JESUS INSTRUCTS THOSE WHO BELIEVE, JOHN 8:31-47

### A. The marks of a believer (31-38)

1. True disciples abide in Jesus (31-32), *So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, 32 and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."*

#### a. Related verses

- 1) John 15:7-8, *If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. 8 By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.*
- 2) 2 John 9, *Everyone who goes on ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God. Whoever abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son.*
- 3) 2 John 1, *The elder to the elect lady and her children, whom I love in truth, and not only I, but also all who know the truth,*
- 4) John 8:36, *So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.*
- 5) Romans 6:22, *But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life.*
- 6) Galatians 5:13, *For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.*
- 7) 1 Peter 2:16, *Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God.*

#### b. Comments

- 1) Who is Jesus addressing in verse 30 and 31?

a) William Hendriksen, *Was this conviction genuine faith [verse 30]? Was it merely a mental persuasion or was it also wholehearted personal surrender? This question, which has caused so much discussion and controversy among commentators, becomes even more acute when it is borne in mind that the verses which follow show a swift change from belief to violent hostility ... The various views of commentators may be summarized as follows: (1) Verse 30 ... refers to those who embraced Jesus by genuine faith. Verse 31 refers to those who had not made the full surrender of faith. Hence, the transition is between verses 30 and 31 ... (2) Verses 30, 31, and 32 refer to genuine believers, those who have experienced a real change of heart and life. The transition is between verses 32 and 33. The objectors in verse 33 (and the verses which follow) are the unbelieving Jews ... (3) Verses 30–36 refer to genuine believers. The transition is between verses 36 and 37 ... (4) The entire section is an uninterrupted story: those who in verse 30 are described as having believed in him are the same as those who oppose him vehemently in the verses which follow. There is no transition from one group to another. The people who are described in verses 30 and 31 do not have genuine faith, as the subsequent verses also clearly indicate.*

b) Thomas Constable, *Some interpreters have sought to differentiate two types of believers in verses 30 and 31 on the basis of the words used. The first, they say, were genuine believers ... which the Greek phrase pisteuo eis plus the accusative ("believe in Him") in verse 30 identifies. The second group was only professors ... The first construction, allegedly describing genuine faith, describes counterfeit faith in 2:23–25. And the second construction, that supposedly always describes superficial faith, describes genuine faith in 5:24 ... others believe that Jesus was teaching that perseverance is the mark of true faith: that genuine believers will inevitably continue to follow Jesus as His disciples. This view contradicts the teaching of other Scriptures that view true believers as capable of not following Jesus faithfully. Many Scriptural injunctions urge believers to follow the Lord faithfully, rather than turning aside and dropping out of the Christian race (e.g., 1 Tim. 1:18–20; 4; 6:11–21; 2 Tim. 1:6, 13; 2:3–7, 12–13, 15–26; 3:14–17; 4:1–8; Titus 3:8). This verse is talking about discipleship, not salvation—and rewards, not regeneration ... The Bible consistently teaches that it is the Holy Spirit who perseveres within the believer, keeping him or her securely saved. It does not teach that believers inevitably persevere in the faith, but that believers can defect from the faith while remaining saved (e.g., 1 Tim. 1:20; 2 Tim. 1:15; 4:10, 16). It is the Savior who perseveres with the saints, not necessarily the saints who persevere with the Savior (2 Tim. 2:13).*

- c) Leon Morris, *It is best to think that John is speaking of people who had made an outward profession, but a profession that did not go very deep. Jesus' words, then, are meant to drive home to formal and casual adherents the meaning of true discipleship. If people in any sense believe in Jesus it is important that they come to see what real faith means.*
- 2) *If you abide in my word ...*
- a) Thomas Constable, *The mark of a true disciple is continuation in the instructions of his or her teacher. A disciple is by definition a learner, not necessarily a believer in the born again sense. A disciple remains a disciple as long as he or she continues to follow the instruction of his or her teacher. When that one stops following faithfully, he or she ceases to be a disciple (e.g., Judas Iscariot). A believing disciple does not lose his or her salvation, which comes as a gift from God. Genuine believers can continue to be disciples of Jesus, or they can cease to be His disciples—temporarily or permanently. God never forces believers to continue following Him, though He urges them to do so (cf. 21:15–23).*
- b) Leon Morris, *It is probably significant that Jesus does not say “you will be” but “you are” disciples. He is not laying down a condition of discipleship, but telling them in what discipleship consists. When anyone abides in Christ's word, then that person is a true disciple.*
- b) Edwin Blum, *Jews who had believed Him indicates that some paid attention to Jesus' words without necessarily committing themselves to Him personally (cf. 6:53). It was possible to “believe” in the message of repentance and the coming kingdom without being born again. Continuing in the truth is the sign of true followers and learners (disciples).*
- 3) *... and the truth, will set you free.*
- a) Thomas Constable, *Disciples who continue to abide (Gr. meno) in Jesus' word (v. 31) come to know the truth. Jesus' words are truth because He is the incarnation of truth (1:14; 14:6). This truth, Jesus' words, sets people free when they truly understand His teaching. It liberates them spiritually from ignorance, sin, and spiritual death ... Jesus was speaking about spiritual truth that He revealed. Thus people in our day have the same problem with Jesus' words as people in Jesus' day. Many take them as referring to physical rather than spiritual things. It is spiritual truth that Jesus revealed that is in view here. Jesus was speaking particularly of the gospel.*
- b) Edwin Blum, *If they really grasped His message, they would find salvation truth. Knowing this salvation truth would liberate them from their bondage in sin ... The truth of which John writes is the truth that is bound up with the Person and work of Jesus. It is saving truth. It is the truth that saves people from the darkness of sin ... People do not always, or even usually, realize that they are in bondage. They tend to rest in some fancied position of privilege, national, social, or religious. So these Jews, proud of their religion, did not even know their need to be free.*
- c) William Hendriksen, *Jesus himself furnishes a commentary on the meaning of freedom. One is free when sin no longer rules over him, and when the word of Christ dominates his heart and life (see verses 34, 35, 37). One is free, therefore, not when he can do what he wishes to do but when he wishes to do and can do what he should do.*
- d) Louis Barbieri, *Eternal life is by faith alone, but being true disciples requires Christians to continue or “abide” in Christ's teachings ... As believers obey (v. 32), they will know the truth experientially, and this truth will make them free. This freedom concerns sanctification, not justification (cf. 17:17, 19). This liberation is not an intellectual accomplishment but a God-empowered freedom from sin, realized through an ongoing faith relationship with Jesus (v. 36).*
- e) F. F. Bruce, *When we bear in mind the meaning of “truth” in this Gospel, where the concept finds its embodiment in Jesus himself, it follows that for his disciples to know the truth “they must not only hear his words: they must in some sort be united with him who is the truth [C. H. Dodd].”*
- f) Grant Osborne, *Those who live as if Christ freed them to do whatever they wish are sadly mistaken. We are free to live lives pleasing to God, not to seek whatever pleasure we want.*

- 4) William Barclay on true discipleship as seen in John 8:31-32, (1) *Discipleship begins with belief ... (2) Discipleship means constantly remaining in the word of Jesus, and that involves four things ... (a) It involves constant listening to the word of Jesus ... (b) It involves constant learning from Jesus ... (c) It involves constant penetrating into the truth which the words of Jesus bear ... (d) It involves constant obeying of the word of Jesus ... (3) Discipleship issues in knowledge of the truth ... (4) Discipleship results in freedom ... Discipleship brings us four freedoms. (a) It brings us freedom from fear ... (b) It brings freedom from self ... (c) It brings freedom from other people. (d) It brings freedom from sin.*
2. The Jews responded that they are in Abraham(33), ***They answered him, “We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say, ‘You will become free?’”***
- a. Related verses
- 1) John 8:37, *I know that you are offspring of Abraham; yet you seek to kill me because my word finds no place in you.*
  - 2) John 8:39, *They answered him, “Abraham is our father.” Jesus said to them, “If you were Abraham’s children, you would be doing the works Abraham did,*
  - 3) Matthew 3:9, *And do not presume to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father,’ for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham.*
- b. Comments
- 1) George Beasley-Murray, *The first objection to the teaching of Jesus in the dialogue that follows rests on a double misunderstanding, namely on the meaning of freedom in Jesus’ proclamation and on the identity of Abraham’s children. The first is clarified in vv 34–36, the second in vv 37–40.*
  - 2) Thomas Constable, *They could not have meant that they had never been physical slaves, since the Egyptians, Assyrians, Babylonians, Greeks, Syrians, and most recently the Romans, had all enslaved them. Probably they meant that they had never been spiritual slaves. Another view is that they meant that their spirit had never been broken. They viewed themselves as spiritually right with God because of their descent from Abraham, with whom God had made a special covenant (cf. Matt. 8:12; Mark 2:17; John 9:40). They denied that they had any significant spiritual need for liberation.*
  - 3) Edwin Blum, *Their response indicated that they had not grasped Christ’s message. Even though they were under Rome, they insisted that as Abraham’s descendants they were free men. How could Jesus free them when they were not slaves? They had no sense of their bondage to sin.*
  - 4) Kenneth Gangel, *The first error attacked in this section is the belief that a relationship with some ancestral figure (in this case Abraham) guarantees a relationship with God. The gospel provides freedom from this kind of illusion.*
  - 5) Leon Morris, *They retort by pointing to their relationship with Abraham. Connection with the great ancestor of the race was a high privilege, and in their view inconsistent with bondage ... So they ask triumphantly how those who have never been in slavery can possibly be made free.*
  - 6) William Hendriksen, *The people who answer Jesus are the same as those who have just been addressed (see on 8:30, 31a). The attitude, however, changes. The word of Jesus, implying that spiritually they were not freemen but slaves, has shocked and angered them. They deeply resented his remark ... Obviously they are not thinking of their political condition when they say this. They surely could not conveniently forget their past bondage to Egypt, Babylonia, Medo-Persia, and Syria, nor their present bondage to Rome! Nor are they thinking about their social condition: many Jews had been slaves. Religiously, however, they deem themselves freemen, being seed (descendants) of Abraham, with whom God had made his covenant of grace (Gen. 17:7) ... Their line of reasoning is on this order: heathen are in bondage; they serve idols; but surely we are not in bondage. We are no heathen; we are not even Samaritans (cf. 8:48). How, then, is it that Jesus can say, “You will become free?”*
  - 7) William Barclay, *Josephus writes of the followers of Judas of Galilee who led a famous revolt against the Romans: ‘They have an inviolable attachment to liberty, and they say that God is to be their only Ruler and Lord’ (Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews, 18:1, 6). When the Jews said that they had been no one’s slaves, they were saying something which was a fundamental article of their creed of life. And even if it was true that there had been times when they were subject to other nations, even if it was true that at that very moment they were subject to Rome, it was also true that even in servitude they maintained an independence of spirit which meant that they might be slaves in body but never in soul.*

- 8) Charles Swindoll, *As usual, Jesus spoke on multiple levels. As usual, the Pharisees zeroed in on the literal interpretation. And, being the self-centered men they were, they applied Jesus' statement to their condition as descendants of Abraham, by which they claimed racial, cultural, and moral superiority. Furthermore, they claimed never to have been enslaved to anyone!*
  - 9) Grant Osborne, *Once more the earthly perspective of Jesus' listeners causes misunderstanding. They interpret "set free" as freedom from enslavement by other nations ... In spite of political domination, they claim freedom of religion. This makes sense, for they were the only people given freedom to worship their own God by the Romans.*
3. Jesus proclaimed that He offers freedom forever (34-36), **Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin. 35 The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever. 36 So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.**
- a. Related verses
    - 1) Romans 6:16-18, *Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? 17 But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, 18 and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness.*
    - 2) Titus 3:3, *For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another.*
    - 3) 2 Peter 2:19, *They promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption. For whatever overcomes a person, to that he is enslaved.*
  - b. Comments
    - 1) ... a slave to sin
      - a) Thomas Constable, *Everyone who commits acts of sin becomes sin's slave. The Greek present participle poion ("who commits sin") implies continual sinning rather than an occasional lapse. This is a general truth that applies to both believers and unbelievers (cf. Rom. 6:16): People who continually commit sin become the slaves of sin ... In Romans 6, Paul explained that at regeneration God broke the chain that makes the believer the slave of sin. Sin does not have the power to enslave believers that it did before we believed in Jesus. However, believers can become sin's slaves by practicing sin (Rom. 6:16). We do not need to be sin's slaves any longer, since God has broken its enslaving power over us. We are no longer its slaves, but we can still choose to live as its slaves by repeatedly submitting to temptation and sinning. Sin gains power over us when we yield to temptation.*
      - b) Edwin Blum, *Three times in this chapter (vv. 34, 51, 58) Jesus said, I tell you the truth (cf. comments on 1:51). The very act of committing sin reveals that the one doing the act is under the power and authority of sin. Sin is personified as a cruel master. Paul used the same illustration (Rom. 6:15-23).*
      - c) Leon Morris, *Jesus is not saying that every individual act of sin represents slavery (though there is a sense in which that, too, is true). He is saying that everyone who continues in sin, who is a sinner, is thereby a slave ... Those who sin are slaves to their sin whether they realize it or not. This means that they cannot break away from their sin. For that they need a power greater than their own.*
      - d) George Beasley-Murray, *There is a slavery from which Abraham's descendants are not exempt and which Abraham's merits cannot affect: bondage to sin is a reality for every one who sins, including Abraham's children. Unlike slavery that is external, this is an inward condition from which one cannot flee, with its roots in a wrong relation to God. Such a slave needs a redeemer!*
      - e) William Hendriksen, *This is one of the most remarkable sayings ever uttered by our Lord. He immediately wipes out the distinction between Jew and Gentile with respect to their standing before God and his holy law.*

2) ... *the son remains forever*

- a) Thomas Constable, *These unbelieving Jews thought of themselves as occupying a privileged and secure position, as sons within God's household, because they were Abraham's descendants (v. 33). Jesus now informed them that they were not sons but slaves. The implication was that they did not enjoy a secure position but could lose it.*
- b) Edwin Blum, *Just as Ishmael, Abraham's slave son, was cast out of the house (Gen. 21:8–21), so those in sin are in danger. Isaac was a son who belonged and therefore remained in the house. Were they like Ishmael, or Isaac? The issue was not physical genealogy but spiritual kinship.*
- c) Warren Wiersbe, *Jesus explained that the difference between spiritual freedom and bondage is a matter of whether one is a son or a servant. The servant may live in the house, but he is not a part of the family; and he cannot be guaranteed a future.*
- d) Kenneth Gangel, *An earthly family, despite the power of its patriarch, offers no sonship in a heavenly kingdom.*
- e) Leon Morris, *The slave's position is temporary. He may in fact remain in a particular house all his life, but he has no rights, no security. At any time he can be sold or transferred to another part of the property. A son may in fact leave home or be expelled (though either would be unusual). But he has the position of a son, and nothing can alter that. He belongs. He has rights.*
- f) William Hendriksen, *The Jews, who pride themselves upon their descent from Abraham, must bear this in mind. The old dispensation with its special privileges for Israel has ended. Abraham's true children will remain in his household and enjoy its privileges permanently, but Abraham's slaves (think of Hagar, and cf. Gal. 4:21–31) will be driven out. Only a son enjoys freedom.*
- g) F. F. Bruce, *A slave, no matter to whom he belongs, has no permanent standing in his master's house. He can very easily be sold to someone else, and he is then in bondage to his new owner. But it is different with a son. He has a place in his father's house as of right, for once a son, always a son.*
- h) William Barclay, *It is a terrible thing to trade on the mercy of God—and that is what the Jews were doing. There is warning here for more than the Jews.*

3) *So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.*

- a) Thomas Constable, *The Son of God, like the illustration's slave-owner, also has the authority to liberate slaves—in this case spiritual slaves—from their bondage to sin and its consequences. Real freedom consists of liberty from sin's enslavement to do what we should do. It does not mean that we may do just anything we please. We are now free to do what we ought to do: what pleases God, which we could not do formerly. When we do what pleases God, we discover that it also pleases us. Hope for real freedom, therefore, does not rest on Abrahamic ancestry but on Jesus' action.*
- b) Edwin Blum, *Jesus is the true Son and seed of Abraham (Gal. 3:16). He remains in the house and is over it (Heb. 3:6). People can become truly free by becoming sons of God by faith in Christ, the Son (Gal. 3:26).*
- c) Warren Wiersbe, *How can slaves of sin be set free? Only by the Son. How does He do it? Through the power of His Word. Note the emphasis on the Word in John 8:38–47, and He had already told them, "The truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). They would not "make room" for His Word in their hearts.*
- d) Leon Morris, *John's interest is not in a son but in the Son. And he "belongs to it forever" in the sense of eternal existence. It is because he is what he is that he can give the freedom of which he speaks. He has rights, and they concern a heavenly, not merely an earthly home. Because he is what he is he is able to give real freedom.*
- e) William Hendriksen, *When an accused man is declared not guilty, he is free. Likewise when a slave has been emancipated, he is free. But the judge or the emancipator does not, as a rule, adopt the freed individual as his own son. But when the Son makes one free, he will be free indeed, rejoicing in the glorious freedom of sonship.*
- f) George Beasley-Murray, *... as the only Son of the Father, he offers the slaves a new relation to God and a share in the inheritance which is his in the Father's house; slaves redeemed into that relationship really know freedom!*

- g) Louis Barbieri, *Since everyone, apart from Christ, commits sin (Rm 3:10–19, 23), everyone is a slave of sin (2Pt 2:19; Rm 6:16, 20). Jesus illustrated this idea with an example from real life. Since a slave can be sold by his owner to another family, he does not remain in the household forever (v. 35). But a son does. Since Jesus is the Son of God, He can make one free (v. 36) in its true spiritual sense (free indeed), both from sin’s penalty (justification) and sin’s power (sanctification).*
- h) Grant Osborne, *The contrast is clear: the Jewish hearers are slaves to sin while Jesus is the eternal Son of God. He descended from heaven and came directly from his Father, and they rejected God’s Son and chose the path of sin. Jesus, however, is offering hope and liberation from their bondage ... In the first-century household a son (when he became an adult) could free a slave. Jesus has that authority from his Father (v. 36), and when he exercises it, those former slaves are “truly free.”*
4. Jesus declared that their father is not His Father (37-38), ***I know that you are offspring of Abraham; yet you seek to kill me because my word finds no place in you. 38 I speak of what I have seen with my Father, and you do what you have heard from your father.***
- a. Related verses
- 1) John 8:40, *but now you seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. This is not what Abraham did.*
  - 2) John 7:1, *After this Jesus went about in Galilee. He would not go about in Judea, because the Jews were seeking to kill him.*
  - 3) John 3:32, *He bears witness to what he has seen and heard, yet no one receives his testimony.*
  - 4) John 5:19, *So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise.*
  - 5) John 6:46, *not that anyone has seen the Father except he who is from God; he has seen the Father.*
  - 6) John 8:44, *You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.*
- b. Comments
- 1) ... *my words find no place in you.*
    - a) Thomas Constable, *Jesus acknowledged that the Jews listening to Him were Abraham’s descendants, but only on the physical level (cf. Rom. 2:28–29; 9:6, 8; Gal. 3:29). Their desire to kill Him—because they rejected His teaching (“word”)—did not evidence true spiritual kinship with Abraham. Abraham had welcomed God’s three angel representatives who visited him with revelations from above (Gen. 18:1–22). Jesus’ hearers had not done that.*
    - b) Edwin Blum, *Physically the Jews of course are the descendants of Abraham. Yet this same crowd was seeking to kill Jesus, Abraham’s true Son, thus showing that they were not Abraham’s spiritual descendants (cf. Rom. 2:28–29; 9:6, 8; Gal. 3:29). They were rejecting His message (My word).*
    - c) Leon Morris, *Jesus concedes their claim to be of Abraham’s line. But over against that he sets their attempt to kill him, which stamps them as being of another spirit than Abraham (cf. Luke 3:8). The reason for their hostility is given in terms of Jesus’ “word,” that is his whole message (cf. v. 31), which finds no place in them (or perhaps, among them). They have no room for it. Religious privilege does not guarantee a right attitude to the things of God.*
    - d) William Hendriksen, *The seed of Abraham seeking to kill the very One to whom Abraham looked forward with joyful anticipation (8:56)! That the Jews were actually bent on murdering Jesus is clear from the following passages: 5:18; 7:19, 25; cf. 7:30, 32, 45; 8:59.*
    - e) William Barclay, *When a messenger from God came to him, Abraham welcomed him with all eagerness and reverence (Genesis 18:1–8). Abraham had welcomed God’s messenger; the Jews of the present were trying to kill God’s messenger. How could they dare call themselves descendants of Abraham, when their conduct was so very different?*
    - f) Charles Swindoll, *Jesus affirmed that His hearers were descendants of Abraham, at least in the physical sense. Their shared heritage, however, ended there. Abraham is the spiritual ancestor of all who place their trust in God because he heard and obeyed God’s word. Because Jesus is the Word of God in human flesh, to reject Him is to reject God. Therefore, the disbelieving Jews were descendants of Abraham in name only.*

2) *I speak of what I have heard from my Father ...*

- a) Thomas Constable, *Jesus claimed to be God's Son, while the Jews claimed to be Abraham's children ... As the conduct of these Jews showed, they were not Abraham's true children. By contrast Jesus' words proved that He was God's true Son, because His conduct backed His words.*
- b) William Barclay, *Jesus was not simply a man telling other men what he thought about things; He was the Son of God telling men what God thought about things.*
- c) Warren Wiersbe, ... *Jesus made a careful distinction between "Abraham's seed" (physical descendants) and "Abraham's children" (spiritual descendants because of personal faith; Gal. 3:6–14).*
- d) Edwin Blum, *Jesus spoke what He had seen in the Father's presence (cf. v. 28). Thus His words are God's truth. But the people had no affinity for His words because they listened to their father (Satan; v. 44) and followed him. As yet Jesus had not identified their father, but the implication was becoming plain.*
- e) Kenneth Gangel, *Jesus had not yet said who their father was, but one thing was already clear: they were not children of God or Abraham as they claimed.*
- f) Leon Morris, *Jesus insists, as always, that his message is derivative. It is from the Father. He has unclouded vision of God, and he speaks accordingly of the things he has seen in him. They by contrast have no vision. They are children of their father and these are the things they do.*
- g) William Hendriksen, *You have heard the whisperings of your father, and you are ready to act; I have actually seen the glory of my Father, and I am giving expression to that which I have seen.*
- h) Grant Osborne, *Their alienation from God's family is shown by two realities: their repeated attempts to kill Jesus, and the fact that they had "no room" in their hearts for his "word" or teaching. They were completely unteachable and judged truth by the extent to which it fit into their narrow, preconceived categories ... The central point of this section is found in verse 38. Jesus and these Jewish interrogators have two different fathers. As in any family, the children "do" or act in accordance with what they have "seen" and "heard" from their fathers. Jesus followed the advice and patterns taught by his Father, God, and these Jews claim to do the same. The problem, as we will learn in 8:44, is that their actual "father" is the devil. They are enslaved to sin just like their true father, and that explains why they have no access to the God of the Bible.*

B. The marks of an unbeliever (39-47)

1. They mistakenly believe that they are children of Abraham (39-41a), ***They answered him, "Abraham is our father." Jesus said to them, "If you were Abraham's children, you would be doing the works Abraham did, 40 but now you seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. This is not what Abraham did. 41 You are doing the works your father did."***

a. Related verses

- 1) John 8:33, *They answered him, "We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say, 'You will become free'?"*
- 2) Galatians 3:7, *Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham.*
- 3) John 8:37, *I know that you are offspring of Abraham; yet you seek to kill me because my word finds no place in you.*
- 4) John 8:26, *I have much to say about you and much to judge, but he who sent me is true, and I declare to the world what I have heard from him."*

b. Comments

- 1) Alfred Edersheim, ... *no principle was more fully established in the popular [Jewish] conviction, than that all Israel had part in the world to come ... because of their connection with Abraham. ... Abraham was represented as sitting at the gate of Gehenna, to deliver any Israelite who otherwise might have been consigned to its terrors.*
- 2) Thomas Constable, *The Jews stubbornly insisted that they revealed their ancestry to Abraham by doing as he did. By claiming Abraham as their father at this stage in the discussion, they were saying that they were as good as Abraham ... Jesus proceeded to repeat the difference between His hearers and Abraham (cf. Gal. 3:16–29). He also implied again that someone other than Abraham was their spiritual father.*

- 3) Edwn Blum, *To counter the thrust of Jesus' argument, the Jews claimed Abraham as their spiritual father. But Jesus responded by stating that spiritual descendants of Abraham do what Abraham did, that is, they believe and obey God. They should respond in faith to the heavenly messenger and do what He says. John the Baptist had earlier warned the Jews against the danger of trusting in their Abrahamic lineage (Luke 3:8) ... But they were rejecting the heavenly Messenger and seeking to kill the One who told them God's Word. Abraham did not do that; he was obedient to God's commands (cf. Gen. 12:1–9; 15:6; 22:1–19) ... The Jews' works were different, so their father (cf. v. 38) must also be different. They could seek to evade Jesus' logic only by denying an illegitimate human paternity and claiming a heavenly one.*
  - 4) Kenneth Gangel, *The crowds insisted that as Jews they were Abraham's children and therefore truth was their special contribution to the world. But Jesus told them since Abraham served God and since he (Jesus) was the Son of God, true children of Abraham should accept his message. But instead of accepting, they intended to kill this proclaimer of truth. Why? Because they behaved just like their father.*
  - 5) Leon Morris, *God called Abraham "my friend" (Isa. 41:8) and spoke to Moses as to a friend (Exod. 33:11). The Jews are implying that they are aligned with Abraham as well as friends of God. Jesus' reply is that deeds count for more than impressive ancestry (cf. Luke 3:8; Rom. 9:6–7). If they were really Abraham's children they would do the kind of deeds that Abraham did. These deeds are summed up in their attempt to kill Jesus ... The truth he speaks to them he first heard from God. Abraham's conduct was not that of his descendants.*
  - 6) William Hendriksen, *They were plotting the downfall of mankind's greatest Benefactor, a man (Christ's human nature comes to the fore here) who is, nevertheless, also God, having come from the very presence of God, so that he can say: I have been telling you what I have heard from God.*
  - 7) William Barclay, *The fundamental thing about Jesus is that he brought to men and women not his own opinions but a message from God. He was not simply a man telling other men and women what he thought about things; he was the Son of God telling people what God thought. He told them the truth as God sees it ... At the end of this passage comes a shattering statement. 'You', said Jesus, 'do the works of your father.' He has just said that Abraham is not their father. Who then is their father? For a moment the full impact is held back. It comes in verse 44 - their father is the devil.*
  - 9) F. F. Bruce, *... Jesus insists explicitly now that moral kinship is the only kinship that matters. To cherish murderous intentions against someone who has imparted the truth of God to them is not the mark of children of Abraham.*
  - 10) Grant Osborne, *The mistaken theology of the Jews continues to flow out of their earthly perspective. They fail to catch Jesus' actual point and continue to stress their physical lineage from Abraham. The spiritual problem continues, so Jesus can only repeat the point he already made in 8:37. Children always reflect the actions of their father; their father thus could not be Abraham, for he would never have turned against God's Messiah.*
2. They can not hear God nor the One sent by Him (41b-43), ***They said to him, "We were not born of sexual immorality. We have one Father—even God." 42 Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and I am here. I came not of my own accord, but he sent me. 43 Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word.***
- a. Related verses
- 1) Hosea 2:4, *Upon her children also I will have no mercy, because they are children of whoredom.*
  - 2) Isaiah 63:16, *For you are our Father, though Abraham does not know us, and Israel does not acknowledge us; you, O LORD, are our Father, our Redeemer from of old is your name.*
  - 3) 1 John 5:20, *And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true; and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.*
  - 4) John 7:28, *So Jesus proclaimed, as he taught in the temple, "You know me, and you know where I come from. But I have not come of my own accord. He who sent me is true, and him you do not know.*
  - 5) John 3:17, *For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.*

b. Comments

- 1) Thomas Constable, *The Jews rejected Jesus' claim that they were not genuine children of Abraham. Their reference to fornication may have been a slur on Jesus' physical paternity. They apparently had heard that Joseph was not Jesus' real father ... These Jews were having difficulty believing what Jesus was saying, specifically about Himself. Jesus identified the source of this difficulty as within them ...not in His ability to communicate clearly.*
- 2) Edwin Blum, *If the Jews really had God as their Father and really loved Him (the Gr. assumes they did not), then they would have loved Jesus because He came from God. Jesus again affirmed His position as God's Representative: the Father sent Him ... Paul later wrote that "the man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him" (1 Cor. 2:14).*
- 3) Kenneth Gangel, *Jesus continued to repeat himself and explain why their relationship to some father other than God had blinded them to the truth. They could not possibly be disciples of the true God. If they were, they would love his Son who was now speaking to them. They had some inherent disability to hear and understand what he was saying.*
- 4) Leon Morris, *He came out from God (the tense points to a moment of time, the incarnation) and has come (this time the tense indicates a continuing state). His was not a self-originated mission. It was the Father who sent him (see on 3:17). Once more we get this concept of mission.*
- 5) William Hendriksen, *It is not at all impossible that a sinister insinuation is implied in the words of these enemies of the Lord, and that what they really meant was this, "We were not born of fornication, but you were!"*
- 6) Louis Barbieri, *That we were not born of fornication may be (1) a denial that they were illegitimate children of Abraham, or (2) a defamatory remark about Jesus' birth. The "we" is emphatic in Greek and favors the second option ...To love Jesus was to love the Father who sent Him. Like these Jewish leaders, if people do not respond to Christ, they cannot hear and spiritually understand His word (v. 43).*
- 7) William Barclay, *To be confronted with Jesus is to be confronted with judgment; he is the touchstone of God by which all are judged ... They refuse to hear and they refuse to understand. We can stop our ears to any warning; if we go on doing that long enough, we become spiritually deaf. In the last analysis, we will only hear what we want to hear; and if for long enough we attune our ears to our own desires and to the wrong voices, in the end we will be unable to tune in at all to the wavelength of God. That is what the Jews had done.*
- 8) Grant Osborne, *Anyone should easily catch what he has been saying, but he proceeds to answer his own question: they remain ignorant because they "are unable to hear what I say." In both Hebrew and Greek "to hear" ... means both to understand and obey. It is their heart of unbelief that is at fault. In addition, their father Satan has plugged their ears to spiritual realities. They are spiritually deaf in both ways.*

3. They do not believe Jesus because their father is the devil (44-45), ***You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies. 45 But because I tell the truth, you do not believe me.***

a. Related verses

- 1) 1 John 3:8, *Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.*
- 2) 1 John 2:4, *Whoever says "I know him" but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him,*
- 3) Revelation 12:9, *And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.*

b. Comments

- 1) Leon Morris, *Now comes Jesus' explicit assertion of the kinship of his enemies with Satan. He has previously hinted at it, but now he affirms it in set terms. They take their origin from the devil, their father. Consequently they set their will on doing his evil desires.*
  - 2) William Barclay, *Then comes the cutting accusation that the real father of the Jews is the devil ... Jesus chooses two characteristics of him ... (1) The devil is characteristically a murderer ... (2) The devil characteristically loves falsehood ... Jesus indicted the Jews as children of the devil because their thoughts were bent on the destruction of the good and the maintaining of the false. Everyone who tries to destroy the truth is doing the devil's work.*
  - 3) William Hendriksen, *Suddenly Jesus speaks out openly; i.e., he no longer hints but plainly names their father. The word which he now utters is like the dropping of a bomb: "You are of your father, the devil." Cf. Matt. 13:38; 23:15; 1 John 3:8; and Rev. 12:9. Physically these Jews, to be sure, are children of Abraham; but spiritually and morally—and that was the issue—they are the children of the devil ... As is clearly evident from this entire passage, Jesus believes that the devil actually exists and that he exerts a tremendous influence on earth. To our Lord the prince of evil was not a figment of the imagination but a grim reality!*
  - 4) John Calvin, *... as believers are recognized as the children of God because they bear his image, so are those rightly recognized to be the children of Satan from his image, into which they have degenerated [1 John 3:8–10].*
  - 5) Edwin Blum, *The devil is the enemy of life and truth. By a lie he brought spiritual and physical death to mankind (cf. Gen. 3:4, 13; 1 John 3:8, 10–15.) He still distorts truth (there is no truth in him ... he is a liar and the father of lies) and seeks to lead people away from God, the Source of truth and life (2 Cor. 4:4). Since these Jews wanted Jesus' death and since they rejected the truth and embraced the lie, their family solidarity with Satan and his desires was certain ... Jesus, in contrast with them, lives in truth and proclaims it. Since unbelievers love darkness not light (cf. 3:19–20), and falsehood not reality, they reject Jesus.*
  - 6) Warren Wiersbe, *Both here and in the Parable of the Tares (Matt. 13:24–32, 36–43), Jesus said that the Pharisees and other "counterfeit" believers were the children of the devil. Satan is an imitator (2 Cor. 11:13–15), and he gives his children a false righteousness that can never gain them entrance into heaven (Rom. 10:1–4).*
  - 7) Charles Swindoll, *Satan is everything that God is not, and to practice sin is to side with Satan against God (1 John 1:5–7). The plain and simple reason for the Pharisees' rejection of Jesus, the Word of God, was their dedication to the father of lies.*
  - 8) F. F. Bruce, *The devil utters falsehood as naturally and spontaneously as God utters truth. If "it is impossible for God to lie" (Hebrews 6:18), equally it is impossible for the devil to speak the truth—even when he chooses to "quote scripture for his purpose." The children of God, then, will be characterized by their love of the truth; the children of the devil by their refusal to accept the truth.*
  - 9) Grant Osborne, *Since these people have followed the father of lies, they by virtue of their very character cannot believe in Jesus. Note that their unbelief arises because Jesus speaks truth. Their very internal makeup is incapable of truth, and they are thus repelled by it. This is a very strong definition of the "natural man" and the unbeliever.*
4. They do not believe the words of God proclaimed by Jesus (46-47), **Which one of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me? 47 Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God.**"
- a. Related verses
- 1) 1 John 4:6, *We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.*
  - 2) John 10:26, *but you do not believe because you are not among my sheep.*

b. Comments

- 1) Thomas Constable, *Obviously many of Jesus' critics thought that He was guilty of committing sin (cf. 5:18). Jesus asked if any of them could prove Him guilty of sin (cf. 18:23). This was one of Jesus' clearest claims to being God. Not one of His critics could prove Him guilty, because He was not guilty. No mere mortal could risk making such a challenge as Jesus did here ... Jesus again claimed that His hearers did not accept His words because they did not belong to God.*
- 2) Edwin Blum, *Belonging to God is the basis for hearing Him. To hear God is not a matter of being able to discern audible sounds but of obeying the heavenly commands. Jesus' hearers absolute rejection of the heavenly Word was a clear reflection that they did not belong to God.*
- 3) Kenneth Gangel, *Believers have had a family transplant in the reverse way transplants are normally done. Rather than having a new family put into them, they have been put into a new family—removed from the family of Satan and placed into the family of God. John 8:47 explains why the Bible makes no sense to some people. Only those who have trusted Christ can grasp the truths of God's Word, believe them, and obey them.*
- 4) Leon Morris, *The first part of the verse is a staggering assertion of sinlessness, and they do not respond to it ... Only one who was in the closest and most intimate communion with the Father could have spoken such words. It is impossible to envisage any other figure in history making such a claim. In the light of their inability to point to any sin in him their continuing failure to believe in him is shown for the sham it was. If there was no sin, then he was indeed speaking the truth and if he was speaking the truth then they should have believed.*
- 5) Warren Wiersbe, *The Pharisees and other religious leaders thought that they were free, but they were actually enslaved in terrible spiritual bondage to sin and Satan. They would not face the truth, and yet it was the truth alone that could set them free.*
- 6) Grant Osborne, *They cannot prove him guilty of any sin, so they should recognize his sinless nature. Combined with his absolute truthfulness, there is no reason they should not believe ... Only one conclusion is possible: All the evidence shows conclusively that Jesus is without sin, and that they in spite of his perfectly truthful character still choose not to believe in him.*
- 7) Leon Morris, *Today's radical theologian is inconsistent when on the one hand he loudly proclaims the moral perfection of Jesus; yet on the other hand rejects his majestic claims! If Jesus is sinless, his claims should be accepted.*
- 8) William Hendriksen, *The question, "Why then do you not believe?" is answered in v 47: it is the one begotten by God through the Spirit who listens to God. They who surrender themselves to the father of lies render themselves insensible to the truth, and so manifest their real paternity (cf. 1 John 4:5–6).*
- 9) Louis Barbieri, *As Paul wrote, "a natural man [non-Christian] does not accept the things of the Spirit of God ... he cannot understand them" (1Co 2:14).*
- 10) William Barclay, *... the Jews had a very wonderful way of thinking of the Spirit of God. They believed that he had two great functions. He revealed God's truth to men and women; and he enabled them to recognize and grasp that truth when they saw it. That quite clearly means that unless the Spirit of God is in people's hearts, they cannot recognize God's truth when they see it. And it also means that if people shut the door of their hearts against the Spirit of God, then, even when the truth is fully displayed before their eyes, they are quite unable to see it and recognize it and grasp it and make it their own ... Jesus was saying to the Jews: 'You have gone your own way and followed your own ideas; the Spirit of God has been unable to gain an entry into your hearts; that is why you cannot recognize me and that is why you will not accept my words.'*

## JESUS PROCLAIMS HIS DEITY, JOHN 8:48-59

### A. The Jews' accusations against Jesus (48), *The Jews answered him, "Are we not right in saying that you are a Samaritan and have a demon?"*

1. Related verse, John 7:20, *The crowd answered, "You have a demon! Who is seeking to kill you?"*
2. Comments
  - a. ... *you are a Samaritan*
    - 1) Warren Wiersbe, *For a Jew to be called a Samaritan was the grossest of insults, and then to be called a demon-possessed person only added further insult.*
    - 2) Edwin Blum, *Samaritans were a mixed race with a religion the Jews considered apostate ... To call Jesus a Samaritan was to use a term of abuse, referring to a heretic or one with a faulty worship.*
    - 3) Thomas Constable, *Since the Jews who were listening to Jesus could not refute His challenge, they resorted to verbal abuse (cf. 7:52). Perhaps they called Him a Samaritan because He had questioned their ties to Abraham ... Perhaps they also said this because He took a lax view of the tenets of Judaism as they understood them. This is the only record of this charge in the Gospels.*
    - 4) Grant Osborne, *Now they charge him with being a "Samaritan and demon-possessed." This may have arisen from his ministry and positive reception in Samaria in chapter 4. The Jews considered the Samaritans heretics, and Samaria was the source of many famous sorcerers like Simon Magus (Acts 8:9–24).*
    - 5) Leon Morris, *Their accusation that Jesus was a Samaritan is puzzling, but clearly it points to a laxity, as they saw it, in the observance of the tenets of Judaism. Possibly they have in mind Jesus' failure to observe the traditions of the elders; in their view this is being disloyal to the faith. He is observing only those parts of their religion which the heretical Samaritans observed and is thus to be classed with them. Or his refusal to agree with the Jews that they had an exclusive right to be called Abraham's children may be the point (cf. vv. 39–40).*
    - 6) William Barclay, *It would be extraordinary that the Son of God should be branded as a heretic. And beyond a doubt it would happen to him again if he returned to this world and its churches.*
  - b. ... *and have a demon*
    - 1) Thomas Constable, *... there are several other instances of the Jews claiming that Jesus had a demon or was demon-possessed (cf. 7:20; 8:52; 10:20). Perhaps these superficial believers concluded that only a demon-possessed heretic would accuse them as Jesus did. Jesus had claimed that their father was the devil, and now they accused Him of being the devil's agent. This charge came after Jesus' repeated statements that He had come from God, and it illustrates the unbelief of these "believing" Jews (v. 31).*
    - 2) Edwin Blum, *Their charge that Jesus was demon-possessed (cf. 7:20; 8:52; 10:20) suggested they thought He was mad, unclean, and evil. How ironic that after He said their father was the devil (8:44), they said He was demon-possessed!*
    - 3) Leon Morris, *The charge of demon possession is found in 7:20; 8:52; 10:20. It is also reported in the Synoptic Gospels, where it is regarded as particularly heinous, being linked with the unforgivable sin (Matt. 12:24ff.; Mark 3:22ff.; cf. Matt. 9:34; 11:18, etc.).*
    - 4) George Beasley-Murray, *It is clear that the charges of being a Samaritan and of being possessed were linked, and were prompted by the denials of Jesus that these Jews were children of Abraham and of God as well as his own claim to being the One Sent by God.*
    - 5) Louis Barbieri, *In their opinion, Jesus should be put to death for blasphemy against God (10:33, 36; Mt 9:3; 26:65). But in claiming Jesus had a demon, the Jewish leaders ironically committed blasphemy against the Holy Spirit (Mt 12:31; Mk 3:28–29).*

B. Jesus' responses (49-51)

1. Jesus honors the Father but they dishonor Jesus (49-50), **Jesus answered, "I do not have a demon, but I honor my Father, and you dishonor me. (50) Yet I do not seek my own glory; there is One who seeks it, and he is the judge.**

a. Related verses

- 1) John 5:23, *that all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him.*
- 2) John 5:54, *Jesus answered, "If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing. It is my Father who glorifies me, of whom you say, 'He is our God.'*

b. Comments

- 1) Thomas Constable, *Jesus did not try to justify Himself. He sought the Father's glory, not His own. What others thought of Him on the human level was relatively immaterial. God's approval was all that mattered to Him because God, not man, was His judge (cf. 1 Cor. 4:2-5).*
  - 2) Edwin Blum, *Jesus' claims were not those of a demon-possessed person. He was seeking not self-exaltation but the honor of His Father. Their attempt to dishonor Him was an attack on His Father ... When accused, Jesus did not seek to justify Himself (cf. John 8:54). He committed His case to the heavenly Judge, knowing that even if people judge the Son falsely, the Father will reverse their verdict and vindicate Him.*
  - 3) Leon Morris, *Jesus is saying that he gives honor where it is due while they do not. This failure on their part is the reason they make such erroneous statements ... He reminds his hearers that there is One who seeks. In this context this must mean "seeks glory." Jesus is not concerned that people should give him the glory that is his due; God is looking after that. God seeks out the glory that people bestow, and not only seeks what they do, but judges it. Jesus' hearers may act as though they are supreme and dispense justice. Actually they are under judgment.*
  - 4) George Beasley-Murray, *He "honors" his Father, i.e., by carrying out his commission to declare the truth he has been given, while the Jews dishonor him through rejecting it. Contrary to their unbelief, the Father honors Jesus, and "he is the one who judges."*
  - 5) William Barclay, *He says: 'I am not looking for honour in this world: I know that I will be insulted and rejected and dishonoured and crucified. But there is one who will one day assess things at their true value and assign to all people their true honour; and he will give me the honour which is real because it is his.' Of one thing, Jesus was sure—ultimately, God will protect the honour of his own. In time, Jesus saw nothing but pain and dishonour and rejection; in eternity, he saw only the glory which those who are obedient to God will some day receive ... Jesus had the supreme optimism born of supreme faith, the optimism which is rooted in God.*
  - 6) Charles Swindoll, *By the end of the encounter, Jesus laid His ax against the root of their rebellion: pride. Jesus, though equal with the Father, did not seek His own glory, but did everything to glorify the Father. The Pharisees, however, glorified themselves and then dared to label God as the source of their glory.*
  - 7) F. F. Bruce, *It is his Father's glory that Jesus seeks to promote by obediently delivering his message; he is not concerned for his own reputation. He can trust his Father to take care of that, and in fact he, above all others, receives "the glory that comes from the only God" (John 5:44). He need not be disturbed by the adverse judgment of those who cannot judge righteously because they judge "according to outward appearance" (John 7:24). So long as he enjoys his Father's approval, he is well content.*
2. All who obey Jesus live forever (51), **Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death."**

a. Related verses

- 1) John 5:24, *Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.*
- 2) John 11:26, *and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?"*

b. Comments

- 1) Louis Barbieri, *With strong emotion (truly, truly), Jesus asserted (v. 51) that anyone who keeps His word (i.e., believes) will never see eternal death.*
- 2) Thomas Constable, *The central purpose of Jesus' mission was not glory for Himself, but glory for His Father—by providing salvation for humankind. Jesus' introduction of this strong statement shows its vital importance. Keeping Jesus' word is synonymous with believing on Him (cf. 5:24; 8:24). The death in view here is eternal death (cf. 11:25).*
- 3) George Beasley-Murray, *The assurance relates to life which physical death cannot extinguish, and so to the death of the spirit; the believer receives eternal life, i.e., the life of the kingdom of God, over which death has no power and which is destined for resurrection.*
- 4) Edwin Blum, *Keeps My Word is another way of expressing a positive response to His revelation ... It means to observe, pay attention to, or to fulfill. A person who obeys Jesus will never see death, that is, he will not be eternally separated from God (cf. 3:16; 5:24).*
- 5) Warren Wiersbe, *Jesus had warned them that they would die in their sins because of their unbelief, and now He invited them to trust His Word and "never see death" (John 8:51). He had said this before in His synagogue sermon (John 6:39–40, 44, 54). Once again, the leaders lacked the spiritual insight to understand what He was saying.*
- 6) William Hendriksen, *As is evident from parallel passages in this Gospel, death, as here used, is separation from the love of God, and experiencing the crushing weight of his wrath and condemnation, and that forever.*
- 7) William Barclay, *It is the literal-mindedness of the Jews which blocks their intelligence. It is not physical life and physical death of which Jesus is thinking. He means that, for those who fully accept him, death has lost its finality; they have entered into a relationship with God which neither time nor eternity can sever. They go, not from life to death, but from life to life; death is only the introduction to the nearer presence of God.*
- 8) Grant Osborne, *The point here is just as important for our day: it is not enough to give lip service to our belief in Christ. Our faith must be shown in our works of obedience and righteous living. True piety should not be merely claimed; it must be performed.*

C. They mock him even more (52-53). ***The Jews said to him, "Now we know that you have a demon! Abraham died, as did the prophets, yet you say, 'If anyone keeps my word, he will never taste death.' 53 Are you greater than our father Abraham, who died? And the prophets died! Who do you make yourself out to be?"***

1. Related verses

- a. Zechariah 1:5, *Your fathers, where are they? And the prophets, do they live forever?*
- b. Hebrews 2:9, *But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.*

2. Comments

- a. Thomas Constable, *The Jews interpreted Jesus' statements as referring to physical death. They did not believe that all people are spiritually dead because of the Fall. They judged that only a demoniac would claim that his words were more powerful than the revelations that Abraham and the prophets, who had died, had received and passed down ... They asked who Jesus was proudly claiming to be (cf. 5:18; 10:33; 19:7). They missed the point that He had been stressing throughout this discourse and throughout His ministry, namely, that He did not exalt Himself at all. He simply did the deeds and said the words that His Father had given Him (vv. 28, 38, 42, 50).*
- b. Edwin Blum, *His opponents thought that He meant physical death. To taste death means to experience death (Heb. 2:9). So they concluded that since Abraham and the prophets had died, He must be insane or demon-possessed (cf. John 7:20; 8:48; 10:19). In Greek their first question in 8:53 expected a negative answer: "You are not greater than our father Abraham who died, are You?" The irony is that of course He is. But He had not come to proclaim His greatness.*

- c. Kenneth Gangel, *The question of who would die and when and how and what would happen after death had occupied Jewish theology for centuries. Suddenly Jesus appeared, talking about life after death in almost casual terms and assuring hearers that acceptance of truth meant that true disciples would never die ... Do not miss the switch in the key question from "Who are you?" in verse 25 to Who do you think you are? in verse 53.*
- d. Leon Morris, *It is worth noticing that the Jews constantly accuse Jesus of "making" himself divine (5:18; 10:33; 19:7). But this Gospel stresses Jesus' continual dependence on the Father (5:19, etc.). He is aware of his high dignity, but speaks of it in terms of obedience and service.*
- e. Louis Barbieri, *Misunderstanding Christ again, the Jewish opponents reasoned that Abraham and the prophets had died. So how could Jesus promise anyone he will never taste of [or experience] death? Jesus could not be greater than Abraham or the prophets, they reasoned (v. 53). Here another Johannine irony surfaces (cf. 4:12). Jesus was not just greater than Abraham and the prophets. He was their God!*
- f. F. F. Bruce, *The word of God came to the prophets of Israel, and they delivered it faithfully to their contemporaries; yet the prophets also died. If the word of God did not preserve from dying those who heard it and kept it, how can the word of this man serve as medicine against death? If he believes that, they reasoned, he is the victim of an illusion, and a demonic illusion at that.*
- g. Grant Osborne, *They conclude Jesus thought of himself as greater than "our father Abraham" (8:53) and so ask, "Who do you think you are?" This is a great irony: the one who, more than any other human being, refused to seek his own glory (7:18; 8:49–50) is accused of magnifying himself, of being a glory hound. The truth is that Jesus is the paradigm of humility and has left his vindication and glory completely in the hands of his Father. These Jewish leaders are reading their own self-seeking pride into Jesus' words and actions.*

D. Jesus declared His relationship to His Father and Abraham (54-56)

1. The Father glorifies the Son (54), **Jesus answered, "If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing. It is my Father who glorifies me, of whom you say, 'He is our God.'**

a. Related verses

- 1) John 8:50, *Yet I do not seek my own glory; there is One who seeks it, and he is the judge.*
- 2) John 17:1, *When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you,*
- 3) Acts 3:13, *The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified his servant Jesus, whom you delivered over and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release him.*
- 4) 2 Peter 1:17, *For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased,"*

b. Comments

- 1) Thomas Constable, *Jesus then refuted His critics' accusation that He was glorifying Himself. Any glory apart from glory that God bestows amounts to nothing (cf. Heb. 5:5). Rather, Jesus said that it was the Father who was glorifying Him. Ironically His critics, who claimed to know God, failed to perceive that this was what God was doing.*
- 2) Edwin Blum, *If He honored Himself (cf. v. 50), His glory would have no value. Yet the hostile unbelievers claimed a relationship to God. It is obvious that they were in error. Jesus' Father is God; their father was Satan.*
- 3) Kenneth Gangel, *True disciples of Jesus are hated by the world. Jesus had been trying to tell them since the beginning of the discussion that he did not stand alone in witnessing the truth of his message. In fact, it was not his message at all but the message of the Father, the one they claimed as their God.*
- 4) Leon Morris, *For the moment Jesus leaves Abraham and returns to the thought of glory. If he were to glorify himself (which he has just disclaimed, v. 50), that would be nothing. All self-glorification is to be discounted. But that does not mean that Jesus is not glorified. The Father glorifies him. The Jews are attempting to make nothing of Jesus ... He speaks of God as "my Father," then differentiates his relationship from theirs by pointing out that him whom he calls "Father" they call not "Father" but "God."*

- 5) William Hendriksen, *The Father is ever engaged in (notice continuative force of the present participle) the glorification of the Son. He does this by enabling the Son to perform mighty works (11:4; cf. Acts 2:22), by causing his virtues to stand out in connection with his suffering and rewarding him for it (12:16; 13:31; 17:1, 2, 5; cf. Phil. 2:9–11); and at times even by a direct voice from heaven (see on 1:34).*
  - 6) George Beasley-Murray, *The reader who knows how that will happen (3:14; 12:23–24, 31–33) realizes the gulf between Jesus and the Jews in their understanding of God and of him. God’s mode of glorifying Jesus, through self-sacrifice in shameful death, is as distant from self-glorification as heaven is from hell.*
  - 7) William Barclay, *It is not difficult to honour oneself; it is easy enough—in fact, fatally easy—to bask in the sunshine of one’s own approval. It is not too difficult to win honour from others; the world honours those who are successful. But the real honour is the honour which only eternity can reveal ...*
  - 8) Leon Morris, *The only glory that matters in Jesus’ eyes is the “glory that comes from the only God.”*
2. The Son obeys the Father (55), ***But you have not known him. I know him. If I were to say that I do not know him, I would be a liar like you, but I do know him and I keep his word.***
- a. Related verses
    - 1) 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.”*
    - 2) John 7:28-29, *So Jesus proclaimed, as he taught in the temple, “You know me, and you know where I come from. But I have not come of my own accord. He who sent me is true, and him you do not know. 29 I know him, for I come from him, and he sent me.”*
    - 3) Matthew 11:27, *All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.*
    - 4) 1 John 1:6, *If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.*
    - 5) John 8:44, *You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.*
  - b. Comments
    - 1) Merrill Tenney, *Their relation to God was formal; his was familial.*
    - 2) Thomas Constable, *Jesus next identified these superficial believers (cf. v. 31) as unbelievers. They had not yet come to believe that He was God (to “know Him”), even though some of them thought that He was a crazy prophet. For Jesus to deny knowing God would be as much of a lie as His critics’ claim that they knew God. The proof that Jesus really did know God was His obedience to God’s Word.*
    - 3) Edwin Blum, *In the deepest intimacy Jesus has a relationship and union with God but His enemies did not. Jesus knows (oida, “to know inherently or intuitively”) the Father, but they did not know (ginosko, “to come to know by experience or observation”) Him. For Him to deny this would be to lie just as they were lying.*
    - 4) Leon Morris, *They have not known him. This probably includes the thoughts that they have never known him in the past and that they do not know him in the present. In this their case is different from that of Jesus. He really does know him (see on 4:18), and to say otherwise would be to reduce himself to the class of liars to which they belong. In their case it means saying that they know God whereas in fact they do not ... Jesus does more than know him. He keeps his word. That is to say, he acts in accordance with all that God has revealed of himself.*
    - 5) William Hendriksen, *You have not learned to recognize him, have not become acquainted with him (though he revealed himself to you), but I do know him intuitively and directly (having been in his very presence from all eternity; cf. 1:18). It is fair to add, however, that the wicked Jews possessed neither the one nor the other kind of knowledge (cf. 8:55 with 7:28); and that Jesus possessed both; i.e., he knew the Father both intuitively and by experience (cf. 8:55 with 10:15; 17:25).*

- 6) William Barclay, *Then Jesus makes the two claims which are the very foundation of his life ... (1) He claims unique knowledge of God. He claims to know him as no one else has ever known him or ever will. Nor will he lower that claim, for to do so would be a lie. The only way to full knowledge of the heart and mind of God is through Jesus Christ. With our own minds, we can reach fragments of knowledge about God; but only in Jesus Christ is the truth in all its fullness, for only in him do we see what God is like ... (2) He claims unique obedience to God. To look at Jesus is to be able to say: 'This is how God wishes me to live.' To look at his life is to say: 'This is serving God' ... In Jesus alone, we see what God wants us to know and what God wants us to be.*
  - 7) F. F. Bruce, *If eternal life is to know God (John 17:3), it is made equally plain here that to keep his word (as communicated through his Son) is the way to eternal life. What does Jesus make himself out to be? That which he essentially is—the living and lifegiving Word.*
  - 8) Grant Osborne, *Jesus both knows God and obeys him (5:19; 6:46; 7:28–29; 8:29). So there is only one path to God, through the one and only Son (1:14, 18).*
3. Abraham rejoiced when he saw Jesus (56), ***Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad.***
- a. Related verses
    - 1) John 8:39, *They answered him, "Abraham is our father." Jesus said to them, "If you were Abraham's children, you would be doing the works Abraham did,*
    - 2) Matthew 13:17, *For truly, I say to you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.*
  - b. Comments
    - 1) Thomas Constable, ... *Jesus said that Abraham anticipated His "day" ("the entire dispensation of Christ"). Jesus was claiming that He fulfilled what Abraham looked forward to. We need to be careful not to read back into Abraham's understanding of the future what we know from revelation that God gave after Abraham died. Clearly Abraham did know that his seed would become the channel of God's blessing to the entire world.*
    - 2) Edwin Blum, *The unbelieving Jews were not Abraham's descendants spiritually (v. 39). But here when Jesus referred to your father Abraham He meant they were physically related to him. Abraham rejoiced to see My day, that is, the messianic salvation which God promised ("all peoples on earth will be blessed through you"; Gen. 12:3). Abraham by faith was granted a son Isaac, through whom the Seed (Christ) would come. How much of the messianic times God revealed to His friend Abraham is unknown. But it is clear that he knew of the coming salvation and he rejoiced in knowing about it and expecting it.*
    - 3) Warren Wiersbe, *How did Abraham "see" our Lord's day, that is, His life and ministry on earth? The same way he saw the future city: by faith (Heb. 11:10, 13–16). God did not give Abraham some special vision of our Lord's life and ministry, but He did give him the spiritual perception to "see" these future events. Certainly Abraham saw the birth of the Messiah in the miraculous birth of his own son, Isaac. He certainly saw Calvary when he offered Isaac to God (Gen. 22). In the priestly ministry of Melchizedek (Gen. 14:17–24), Abraham could see the heavenly priesthood of the Lord. In the marriage of Isaac, Abraham could see a picture of the marriage of the Lamb (Gen. 24).*
    - 4) Leon Morris, ... *he may well mean that Abraham's general attitude to this day was one of exultation, rather than referring to any one specific occasion in the life of the patriarch.*
    - 5) William Hendriksen, ... *he interpreted God's promise (Gen. 15:4–6; 17:1–8; cf. 22:18) as meaning that in the line of Isaac that Blessed One would at length arrive through whom God would bless all the nations. Thus, as is stated specifically in Heb. 11:13, he (and others before and after him) died in faith, not having received (the fulfilment of) the promises, but having greeted them from afar. It was thus that Abraham saw the day of Christ and rejoiced.*
    - 6) Louis Barbieri, ... *when Isaac was born 25 years later, Abraham saw Messiah, in that he anticipated the fulfillment of covenantal promise and looked for the coming of the Messiah and was glad. Abraham also witnessed, through the binding of Isaac, a foreshadowing of the death and resurrection of Christ (Heb 11:19).*

- E. They rejected His response and Jesus proclaimed His deity (57-58), **So the Jews said to him, “You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?” 58 Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.”**
1. Related verse, Exodus 3:14, *God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” And he said, “Say this to the people of Israel: ‘I AM has sent me to you.’”*
  2. Comments
    - a. C. K. Barrett, *The meaning here is: Before Abraham came into being, I eternally was, as now I am, and ever continue to be.*
    - b. Thomas Constable, *The Jews did not understand Jesus’ meaning because they disregarded the possibility of His deity. To them it seemed ludicrous that Abraham could have seen Jesus’ day, in any sense, since millennia separated the two men ... This was the third and last of Jesus’ solemn pronouncements in this discourse (cf. vv. 34, 51). If Jesus had only wanted to claim that He existed before Abraham, He could have said: “I was.” By saying, “I am,” He was not only claiming preexistence but deity (cf. vv. 24, 28; 5:18; Exod. 3:14; Isa. 41:4; 43:13) ... Jesus existed before Abraham came into being ...*
    - c. John Walvoord, *The doctrine of the eternity of the Son of God is the most important doctrine of Christology as a whole because if Christ is not eternal then He is a creature who came into existence in time and lacks the quality of eternity and infinity which characterizes God Himself.*
    - d. Edwin Blum, *They could not understand how Abraham and Jesus could have possibly had any visual contact ... Jesus then affirmed His superiority over the prophets and Abraham. Abraham came into being; but when he was born, Jesus was already existing. I Am is a title of Deity (cf. Ex. 3:14; Isa. 41:4; 43:11–13; John 8:28); the Jews’ response (v. 59) showed they understood it that way. Jesus, because of His equality with God (5:18; 20:28; Phil. 2:6; Col. 2:9), existed from all eternity (John 1:1).*
    - e. Kenneth Gangel, *... Jesus claimed to be ‘I AM’ over against Abraham. That claim was a reminder of the claims for God in the Old Testament over against creation (cf. Ps. 90:2; Isa. 42:3–9) and of the self-designation for the comforting God of Isaiah (41:4; 43:3, 13). The claim of Jesus, therefore, was clearly recognized from the Jews’ perspective to be a blasphemous statement they could not tolerate.”*
    - f. William Hendriksen, *The Jews had committed the error of ascribing to Jesus a merely temporal existence. They saw only the historical manifestation, not the eternal Person; only the human, not the divine. Jesus, therefore, reaffirms his eternal, timeless, absolute essence.*
    - g. George Beasley-Murray, *“Before Abraham came into existence I am” expresses “the contrast between the existence initiated by birth and an absolute existence” ... The statement implies a real pre-existence, and is possible because the “I” of Jesus is one with the “I” of the divine Logos. The form is reminiscent of Ps 90:2 (LXX 89:2): Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting ... You are!*
- F. They attempted to kill Jesus but He left the temple (59), **So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple.**
1. Thomas Constable, *The Jews understood that Jesus was claiming to be God. They prepared to stone (“picked up stones to throw at”) Him for making what they considered to be a blasphemous claim (5:18; Lev. 24:16). Such treatment, without a trial, was an accepted form of punishment when someone supposedly defied the Mosaic Law or the traditions of the elders (cf. Luke 4:29; John 10:31; Acts 7:58; 21:31). However, Jesus hid Himself, because His hour had not yet come (2:4; 7:6, 8, 30, 44; 8:20; 18:6).*
  2. Edwin Blum, *Jesus’ clear affirmation of His deity evoked a crisis. They had to decide whether He was what He claimed or was a blasphemer (cf. 5:18). Stoning was the normal punishment for this sin. The words, but Jesus hid Himself, could refer to a supernatural means of escape. The NIV’s slipping away (lit., “He went out”) implies ordinary means (cf. 5:13; 10:39; 12:36). Once again His time had not yet come (cf. 2:4; 7:6, 8, 30; 8:20).*
  3. Warren Wiersbe, *He had once again made Himself equal with God (John 5:18), and this was the sin of blasphemy, worthy of death (Lev. 24:16). Jesus was divinely protected and simply walked away. His hour had not yet come. We cannot help but admire His courage as He presented the truth and invited blind religious men to trust Him and be set free.*

4. Leon Morris, *“Hid himself” is really a passive, “was hidden.” John is perhaps hinting that God protected his Son. It is not so much that Jesus by superior cleverness concealed himself from them. It was rather that he was concealed by Another, and so passed out of the Temple. It may well be that we are to discern symbolism in this action. “At this point Jesus symbolically abandons his own people (the temple) and goes out to humanity (the man born blind; chap. 9).”*
5. George Beasley-Murray, *The Jews respond to what they viewed as the blasphemy of Jesus with stones that lay at hand from the builders of the outer court, but they were unable to hurl them. On this Augustine commented, “As man he flees from the stones, but woe to those from whose hearts of stone God flees!”*
6. Louis Barbieri, *Spiritually, the Jewish leadership was blind, and His departure from the temple pictured God’s OT glory departing from the temple (Ezk 10–11).*

<b>SUMMARY</b>
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- Thomas Constable, *This concludes Jesus’ Light of the World Discourse (vv. 12–59). The Light of the world now symbolically abandoned the Jews by leaving the temple, and went out to humanity in general, represented by the man born blind in the next chapter.*
- Grant Osborne, *The final section (vv. 48–59), on the truth of Jesus’ personhood, is the key to everything. He is so much more than prophet or Messiah. He is Yahweh, and until we both acknowledge and conduct ourselves under that reality we can never live the life God wants for us. As Paul says so well throughout his writings, Jesus is Lord of all, and we must make him Lord of our lives and live under that glorious reality. Then we will be “more than conquerors” (Rom 8:37) and truly live lives of freedom in him.*