

*As Jesus continues to confront the religious Jews in Jerusalem, a beautiful event is given to us to know and understand. This story is not found in the most ancient versions of the scriptures, but it is included in numerous of the manuscripts from which the scriptures are based. Some commentators have questioned whether it is actually part of the scriptures, or should be included. Most, however, agree that it was most likely added by John the Gospel writer at a later time. None of the doctrines presented here are questionable, and this event is very typical and characteristic of the way Jesus treated such confrontations. It is quite appropriate where it is located. Human judging is introduced here, and the only One truly authorized and capable of righteous judgment. Augustine, one of the early church father, says that this event was omitted from the scriptures because some thought it would encourage adultery. This event and Jesus' treatment of the woman and her accusers does not condone sin, it condemns the sin, but not the sinner.*

*This chapter also contains an incredible exchange between Jesus and the religious Jews who sought His death. The words are charged with anger, and judgment. In this confrontation, Jesus also makes one of the most dramatic claims of His divine origins and character, as well as another "I AM" statement proclaiming Himself the Light of the World.*

*<sup>1</sup>But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. <sup>2</sup>Now early in the morning He came again into the temple, and all the people came to Him; and He sat down and taught them. <sup>3</sup>Then the scribes and Pharisees brought to Him a woman caught in adultery. And when they had set her in the midst, <sup>4</sup>they said to Him, "Teacher, this woman was caught in adultery, in the very act. <sup>5</sup>"Now Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do You say?" <sup>6</sup>This they said, testing Him, that they might have something of which to accuse Him.*

- Once again, it is important to **consider the context for this event.** Bible books were not originally separated into chapters – that is the work of humans. The previous chapter (7) was set during the Feast of Tabernacles, and the amazing statement Jesus made at the very climax of this dramatic celebration, just the night before this event in chapter 8. Jerusalem is full, overflowing, with people. The Jews are looking for ways to trap or ensnare Jesus so they can arrest Him. They are busily plotting and scheming. That night the Jews each went home, and Jesus went out to the Mount of Olives, but returned inside the city the next day to teach. Chapter 8 should be viewed as a continuation of chapter 7.



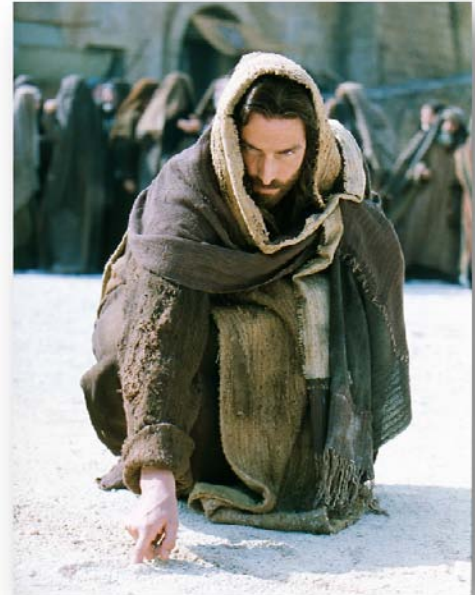
- As usual, the people are following Him, gathering to hear Him teach.

- *“Then the scribes and Pharisees brought to Him a woman caught in adultery. And when they had set her in the midst...”* This has to be one of the most understated comments in scripture! It is not likely this woman came willingly. She probably had to be dragged or bound in some way. Try to picture the unfolding scene here. Jesus is teaching among a large group of people. It is probably fairly quiet, except for His words. Now these desperately plotting religious Jews drag a disheveled woman into the midst of this orderly group, hoping to trap Jesus in His response to their questions and accusations. She would have been totally humiliated, at the least, at being dragged into the Temple by these religious Jews. These self-righteous men are only using her to trick the Rabbi they hated.
- *“Now Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do You say?”* **This is a deliberate plot.** Because of the large crowds and festival environment, immoral acts were not uncommon. However, these guys most likely plotted and planned this somehow. Israel was under Roman occupation at this time, and Jews were not permitted to carry out any death sentences. The Old Testament Law required stoning for adultery, but they could not “legally” do this under the Romans. The Jews knew this. So if Jesus had said to stone her, he could have been in conflict with the Romans, and perhaps even arrested. If He had said not to stone her, He would be going against the Law of Moses, which was sacred to these Pharisees. Either way, the Jews thought they “had” Jesus at this moment.
- **COMMENTARY:** *“What could be more crude and rude and brutal than this act of these religious rulers? As our Lord was sitting in the temple area teaching the people, there is a hullabaloo outside. Then here come these religious rulers dragging a woman with her clothes in disarray, her hair all disheveled, defiant, and resisting them. The crowd would naturally turn and look to see what in the world was happening. The religious rulers bring her right into the midst of the group that the Lord Jesus is teaching! They fling her down on the ground there and make their crude charge. “This woman was taken in adultery, in the very act.” (McGee)*
- It is interesting to note here that these Jews sort of **altered the Law a bit to suit their needs.** This type of execution was not allowed unless the woman was a betrothed virgin (Deuteronomy 22:23-24). We don’t know her status in this story. Also, the Law required that both parties be stoned to death, the woman AND the man (Leviticus 20:10, Deuteronomy 22:22). So where was the man involved in this sin? There is a bit of a double standard happening here, as was well as using the Word and the Law to suit their needs. This is something all humans do. We twist the Word of God to make it meet our needs, and to attempt to circumvent its intent.
- **CAN YOU IMAGINE YOURSELF IN THE PLACE OF THIS WOMAN?** This woman is guilty. There is no doubt about that. She has sinned. Think about the worst sin (in your eyes) in your life. What if you had been “discovered” and exposed like this. How would you feel? How do you feel now about your sin? We need to remember that each one of us could be in this woman's sandals!

*But Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground with His finger, as though He did not hear.<sup>7</sup> So when they continued asking Him, He raised Himself up and said to them, “He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first.”<sup>8</sup> And again He stooped down and wrote on the ground.<sup>9</sup> Then those who heard it, being convicted by their conscience, went out one by one, beginning with the oldest even to the last. And Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.*

- This is the **only instance on record where Jesus writes** anything, and we don’t even know what it was!

- Anywhere that scripture is not completely precise, **speculation abounds, and many theories surround the question of exactly what Jesus wrote in the dirt.** Seems like an unusual exercise. Some think He wrote some message or word just to the Pharisees. Some think He wrote out the 10 commandments, or other portion of the Law. Still others offer a unique idea, that He wrote the names of the women that these Pharisees were having extra-marital affairs with (not unusual). We don't even know if what He wrote had any effect on these Pharisees, the crowds listening, or the woman caught in adultery. If we were supposed to know, God would have told us. It is interesting to speculate about, but that's all we can do.
- It is interesting to note that some have thought that Jesus wrote an OT verse in the sand that has special meaning considering what had just happened in the Temple, and the upcoming debate (heated!) between Him and the Pharisees: ***“LORD, hope of Israel, those who leave you will be shamed. People who quit following the LORD will be like a name written in the dust, because they have left the LORD, the spring of living water.”*** (Jeremiah 17:13, NCV) He might have written the names of these Pharisees in the dust. He had just proclaimed Himself to be the living water, and these Pharisees certainly had left God and were operating in their own realm of reality, not God's. We will never know what He wrote (at least this side of heaven!). It doesn't matter.
- ***“He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first.”*** Jesus appeared not to hear these Jews accuse the woman and ask Him what He would do. He took HIS TIME (always different from ours!), but eventually Jesus did answer the accusers. As always, His answer was stunning, and disarming, and certainly unexpected. He did not abolish Moses' Law. Instead, He applied the same Law to all of them, including the ones who had accused the woman. Then He wrote in the sand again.
- ***“Then those who heard it, being convicted by their conscience, went out one by one, beginning with the oldest even to the last.”*** We don't know exactly what and how these men were convicted, but the Holy Spirit did His work in them. Whether it was the spoken words of Jesus, revealing that they too were sinful before a holy God, or whatever it was that Jesus wrote in the dirt, they realized that none of them were without sin and could not do as Jesus instructed them to do. Beginning with the oldest of these men (the most senior among them would have the highest level of respect and following, and would also have a lifetime of experience to filter the Word of God), one by one they left. The younger ones, those probably most zealous and not as seasoned, were the last to go. Some have suggested that these men left not out of conviction, but because they had failed to do what they came to do. Every time these guys try to trap Jesus, they end up being trapped and snared themselves.
- ***“And Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.”*** Now the sinner is left alone with the only person who really could have condemned her. Remember that those who had gathered to listen to Him teach are still there as well, so she is not completely alone with Him. These crowds are watching, breathlessly, the drama unfold before them. Can you imagine what this woman is feeling about now?



<sup>10</sup>*When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, “Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?”* <sup>11</sup>*She said, “No one, Lord.” And Jesus said to her, “Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more.”*

- With the Pharisees gone, Jesus no longer writes in the dirt, but returned to standing. The accusers are gone, but the woman remains. Jesus set a new standard for judgment. Only one without sin can judge. That leaves out the entire human race. Only ONE qualifies as judge. **This is a very important lesson for us.**
- Jesus asks where the woman’s accusers are and the woman responds that no one condemned her. She realizes that the One she is with deserves the title “Master.” (Lord, “Kurios” in Greek). She is completely puzzled at this point, but relieved. She probably thought she was facing death just a few moments ago. Perhaps this woman also realizes that the only One who could legally judge her is the One standing before her now.
- **“Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more.”** As the only authorized One to judge this woman, Jesus does not condemn her. The word for “condemns” here is *katakrino* in Greek, which literally means to judge against, or find guilty. His lack of condemnation is not a sign of tolerance or laxness about sin. He has already confirmed she is a sinner, and now He indicates she is forgiven. His directive to her means not to go and deliberately commit sin. All of us will continue sinning before God and others as long as we are upon this earth in these corrupt conditions and bodies. We will fail, but thankfully, we also have His forgiveness. This means that we should not sin ON PURPOSE. Jesus looks upon the heart. He loved the “contrite” heart of David, who although he sinned, was sorrowful and repentant over those sins, seeking forgiveness. Some say this is a pointed message to the “carnal Christian,” the so-called believer who continues in deliberate sin. It is difficult to imagine, however, how someone can love and be committed to Jesus and choose to continue deliberately sinning.
- **This event is a very good reminder for all of us.** Only Jesus is qualified to judge others. Not us. And while He did not come the first time to judge, He will when He returns again. Judging is HIS job, not ours. Yet we do it every day. We need to put ourselves in this woman's place and learn to see others as Jesus sees them.



<sup>12</sup>*Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, “I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.”*

- We do not know exactly who the “them” here are. These are no doubt the ones who had already gathered to hear Him teach, but it may also include the Pharisees who interrupted His teaching to try to trick Him into saying something they could trap Him with. We see later that the Pharisees do respond, so they are likely still among the crowds.

- It was typical for **Jesus to make a teaching opportunity** out of some work He had just done. Here He uses the “darkness” of the woman’s sin, and also the Pharisees’ sin of pride, and makes it into a lesson on His identity and what happens in a life that chooses to follow Him instead of the world (darkness).

▪ **COMMENTARY:** Here Jesus is saying, “I am the light of the world.” He has just exposed the sin of the scribes and the Pharisees who brought the woman guilty of adultery. Because they were just as guilty as she, they had to flee. When one turns on the light, all the rats, the bats, and the bedbugs crawl away. Light exposes sin, which is the reason the scribes and the Pharisees had to leave. (McGee)

- **“I am the light of the world.”** This is the 2nd official great **“I AM” declaration** in John’s Gospel. This is the day after the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles when Jesus made the astounding statement that anyone who thirsts should come to Him for eternal “quenching” of thirst. The pouring out of water at the altar was one of the traditions of this feast, so Jesus used that to make a big point about Himself. Lighting the giant lamps in the women’s court in the temple was also a tradition, which was to remind them of the pillar of cloud by day and the fire by night that guided their wanderings. Jesus is using this well-known symbol to make another point here. Not only is He the living water that quenches all thirst, but He is the light of the world that will guide our lives forever.
- **The Feast of Tabernacles was all about celebrating the work God did for the Jews during their time in the wilderness.** A golden lampstand was lighted during the Feast of Tabernacles. Jesus uses this symbol for Himself to give us yet another rich analogy of His identity and place in our lives. In chapter 6, He called Himself the Bread of Life, using the manna God provided in the wilderness to illustrate His lesson. In chapter 7 He used the water obtained from a rock to equate Himself to the Living Water. Here in chapter 8 He calls Himself the Light of the World, a reference to the giant menorahs lighted for the feast, reminders of the pillar of fire in the desert (Exodus 13:21; Numbers 9:15-23). The God who provided all these things in the wilderness for 40 years, is now providing these things in His Son, who would give His life to save them from the darkness of the world.
- This lesson about the Light of the World is in **contrast to the moral darkness of the nation and the world in general**, as illustrated dramatically by the woman caught in adultery. Jesus describes His person and role as the Light (1:4, 9), the very revelation of the character and truth of God, and the solution to the evil in mankind and the world. His Light will overcome the darkness, and the darkness will not and cannot overcome the Light.
- In Matthew 5 **Jesus tells us that WE are the light of the world**. How do we reconcile this with His saying HE is the light of the world? ***“You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.”*** (Matthew 5:14-16) **WHAT DOES THIS MEAN TO US? WHAT RESPONSIBILITY DOES IT CARRY? DO WE DO THIS?** While Jesus was physically in this world, He was the Light. He still is the Light of the world, but He is not physically here any longer. But we are. We are the Temple of the Holy Spirit, and now we become that Light as well.



- There is a beautiful lesson here from the Lampstand, the menorah, in the Tabernacle and Temple. In Exodus, God provided very specific instructions about the construction of this lampstand. It was not in pieces, with branches plugged into the main vine. It was hammered out of **one solid piece of gold**. Pure gold is a representation of the deity and perfection of Jesus, and seven is the number of completeness. The believer is made complete by the perfection of Jesus. The number for man in scripture is six, or incomplete. We are only complete in Jesus Christ.
- Jesus is represented by the main branch of the lampstand, and we as believers are represented by the six branches that extend from the main branch, **but we are ONE lampstand, one source of light**. This describes our relationship with Him: *“I am the vine, you are the branches ... apart from me you can do nothing”* (John 15:5 – we will spend more time on this later). Once we believe, we are to live as “children of light.” *“For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light.”* Our source of light in this world is Jesus, the true light. Jesus calls **us** “light of the world” and commands us to *“let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven”* (Matthew 5: 14, 16).
- In the beginning of this Gospel (1:4-5) the writer makes the statement: *“In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.”* One of the many contrasts John uses in this book is between light and darkness. Darkness is the world, the world’s way of doing things, the way of sin. God is the Light of the world that dispels the darkness, provides the ability to see the way.
- **COMMENTARY: “I am the light of the world” is the highest claim that He has made so far in the Gospel of John. One of the definitions of God is that He is Light (1 John 1:5). He is absolute in His holiness and in His justice. Even physical light is one of the most complicated things as well as one of the most essential things for us. Who really knows what it is? In some ways it acts like waves, and in some ways it acts like particles of matter. The startling thing is that men, acting on both of these definitions or principles, have been able to make remarkable inventions and discoveries. Some say that both are true and yet others say both can’t be true. Is light the absence of darkness? Is darkness the absence of light? (McGee)**
- We made this comment back in the comments on chapter 1: **Light will always dispel darkness**. Darkness cannot dispel light. It is physically impossible. Light exposes what is in the dark. Light is always symbolic for truth, knowledge and good (as opposed to evil, which is symbolized by darkness). The purpose of light is to allow us to see clearly, rather than stumble around in the dark. Light dispels the darkness, wherever it exists, and that is its intended purpose. That is also Jesus’ purpose — to shine the Light, the Truth, in a dark world and overcome the darkness.

<sup>13</sup>*The Pharisees therefore said to Him, “You bear witness of Yourself; Your witness is not true.”* <sup>14</sup>*Jesus answered and said to them, “Even if I bear witness of Myself, My witness is true, for I know where I came from and where I am going; but you do not know where I come from and where I am going.”* <sup>15</sup>*“You judge according to the flesh; I judge no one.”* <sup>16</sup>*“And yet if I do judge, My judgment is true; for I am not alone, but I am with the Father who sent Me.”*

- *“You bear witness of Yourself; Your witness is not true.”* The Pharisees are back! Either there are more of them in the original crowd, or these guys never really went very far away after Jesus diffused their feeble attempt to trick Him. They are still listening for any opportunity to foil Him, and now **another confrontation begins**. Here they are accusing Him of boasting, or of being just one witness about who He is.

- This conversation is similar to the one in chapter 5, where Jesus presented all the witnesses (more than one according to Jewish Law and tradition) about Him. Jesus responded then with all the witnesses (4) who backed Him up (John the Baptist, His own works, God the Father Himself, The Scriptures). They are essentially calling Him a liar here.
- ***“Even if I bear witness of Myself, My witness is true, for I know where I came from and where I am going;...You judge according to the flesh; I judge no one. And yet if I do judge, My judgment is true; for I am not alone, but I am with the Father who sent Me.”*** In spite of what Jesus has already told them in chapter 5 (they apparently have this same kind of confrontation multiple times, and these guys have heard repeatedly Jesus' claims and His "witnesses,") He says that even if He WERE the only one bearing witness to Him and His words (which He isn't, but if He were!) He has **3 reasons why He speaks the TRUTH:**
  - 1) He knows where He came from and therefore He knows Himself (*this is also referencing all the conversations and doubts about His origin – Nazareth or Bethlehem, heaven or earth?*)
  - 2) They (the religious Jews) judge "according to the flesh" (*which is what all of us do, and what Jesus says is filled with unrighteousness [see John 7:8], but Jesus judges the heart*)
  - 3) He did not come this time to judge, but even if He did, it would be true because the Father is with Him and they are One.

Of course all of this is true, but these stony hearts cannot hear truth because they hear from their father, the father of lies. (see 8:44)

- ***“...but you do not know where I come from and where I am going. “You judge according to the flesh;...”*** This is in a sense an indictment, a judgment, on these religious Jews. They should have known where He came from (*they should have known the scriptures better, and they should have investigated carefully to determine the truth of His birthplace, and His ultimate origin, and they should have known He would return to that place – heaven and the throne of God*), and they judged “according to the flesh” which is in unrighteousness.

***<sup>17</sup>“It is also written in your law that the testimony of two men is true. <sup>18</sup>“I am One who bears witness of Myself, and the Father who sent Me bears witness of Me.”***

- Jesus reminds them of their precious Law that says that the testimony of two witnesses is true. Jesus and God the Father are these two witnesses. You can't get any better than this.

***<sup>19</sup>Then they said to Him, “Where is Your Father?” Jesus answered, “You know neither Me nor My Father. If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also.” <sup>20</sup>These words Jesus spoke in the treasury, as He taught in the temple; and no one laid hands on Him, for His hour had not yet come.***

- **These religious Jews once again question Jesus about “His Father.”** They have not connected the dots at all that Jesus' Father is God Almighty. Chances are they know His earthly father was Joseph. This whole argument keeps coming up.
- Jesus fires right back that if they knew Him, they would know His Father. He is accusing them of **not having a relationship with God**, His Father. It is not enough just to know the Word of God. You must have a relationship with the AUTHOR.

- *“Jesus spoke in the treasury, as He taught in the temple ...”* We are given an interesting piece of information here. The writer of this Gospel tells us that Jesus was teaching in the treasury. The treasury was in the court of women. The Temple complex had a number of courtyards surrounding the main Temple. The most outer courtyard was the court of Gentiles. This is the only place a Gentile could enter if he or she wanted to worship Yahweh. This is why Jesus was so angry at the money changers, since they set up their crooked shop in this place, effectively keeping removing any access the Gentiles would have. The next courtyard was the court of women, then the inner court of men. Here Jesus is teaching in the court of women. That is an interest note for us. Jesus came initially to the Jews, then to the Gentiles, but He included everyone, including the women. He welcomed everyone to hear Him and learn from Him. The Jews could not have brought the adulterous woman into any space other than the court of women. Jesus “just so happened” to be there!
- Once again, these angry, prideful men attempt to take Jesus. But once again, it is not time. A reminder that **God has a master plan that cannot be thwarted** by anything or anyone. All things will happen in His pre-ordained time.

*<sup>21</sup>Then Jesus said to them again, “I am going away, and you will seek Me, and will die in your sin. Where I go you cannot come.” <sup>22</sup>So the Jews said, “Will He kill Himself, because He says, ‘Where I go you cannot come’?” <sup>23</sup>And He said to them, “You are from beneath; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. <sup>24</sup>“Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.”*

- Even after His death, these phonies will seek Jesus to put an end to His teaching. But they cannot go to where He is going (to heaven), mostly because they will die in their sins. The only way they will die "in their sins" is by not accepting His gift.
- ***Will He kill Himself....?*** These guys can't imagine what they've just said. They say this because they can't believe they couldn't go somewhere He could. No, Jesus will not kill Himself. He will GIVE Himself up as a ransom for our freedom.
- ***“You are from beneath...”*** This is not a reference to hell, but to this world, and this world system. Jesus is not from this world, He is from above (heaven). These Pharisees have sold out to the world.
- He explains very simply and plainly that if they do not believe Him, and all the witnesses who testify of Him, they will die in their sins, meaning they will not have accepted the gift of forgiveness and by so doing, will invite their own judgment.
- ***“that I am He...”*** The "He" part of this is added in our English version. Originally it reads "I AM." This is but one of many such instances where Jesus openly claims **to not only be FROM the Great Name, the I AM, but also that He IS the I AM**. So far the crowds appear to miss this reference, which He will clearly make at the end of the chapter.



<sup>25</sup>Then they said to Him, "Who are You?" And Jesus said to them, "Just what I have been saying to you from the beginning. <sup>26</sup>"I have many things to say and to judge concerning you, but He who sent Me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I heard from Him."<sup>27</sup>They did not understand that He spoke to them of the Father.

- The Jews are probably getting cynical and nasty as they ask again who He is. They've asked this many times before and the answer is always the same. Jesus remarks that He's already told them, and has been telling them the same thing since He began His ministry.
- Jesus had much more to say to them, and could have condemned them right then and there, but His purpose then was to share the message of salvation, forgiveness of sins through the Messiah, from the One who sent Him - the Father. And Jesus only speaks what the Father gives Him to speak. He is obedient to the Father, even though **He could have blasted them to kingdom come! That will come later, when He returns.**
- True to form, the **Pharisees "didn't get it."** They still don't understand that Jesus was referring to HIS father, Almighty God. They didn't know God, so they didn't know Him, can't hear Him because of hardened hearts, and refused His message. Sounds like the world today.

<sup>28</sup>Then Jesus said to them, "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and that I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father taught Me, I speak these things. <sup>29</sup>"And He who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him."

- **"Lift up..."** This is a familiar (*people would have understood what He was saying*) phrase which indicates His crucifixion. This is the same thing He told Nicodemus in chapter 3. **"Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, the Son of Man must also be lifted up. So that everyone who believes can have eternal life in him."** (John 3:14-15, NCV) Jesus is saying that when He is dead, buried and resurrected, the light bulb will come on, and the world will know Him as the Messiah, the Savior of the world. He doesn't necessarily mean these blinded Pharisees, but those who will look on Him and respond to the call of God.
- **Interesting to note** that after the death and resurrection of Jesus, many of these religious rulers believed. (Book of Acts) Many of the priests in Jerusalem believed. This is what He is saying to them now. Afterwards they (some of them) would know that He is the One He claims to be. It is His redemptive death that explains Him, why He came and who He is.
- Again, the original wording here is **I AM, not I am He.** Another reference to *being* the great I AM. Jesus is leading up to one of His most profound statements yet.
- When Jesus calls Himself **the Son of Man**, the title He used most often for Himself, He is referring to Daniel 7:13-14. The use here references His crucifixion but also to His coming in victory and power a second time to be given all dominion.
- Once more, He repeats His **unity with the Father.** Not only is He true to what the Father has given Him to speak, but the Father is there with Him. They are ONE.

<sup>30</sup>As He spoke these words, many believed in Him. <sup>31</sup>Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. <sup>32</sup>"And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

- **"...those Jews who believed Him,..."** There were apparently some among this Pharisee group who did believe. The term "the Jews" here applies to the rulers, not just the commoners.

- Many others, besides the few Pharisees, believed as well. At this point it is likely that only Jesus knew this. He alone knew their hearts. They would most likely not be making public statements about Him here.
- He goes on to say that if they are obedient to His words, they are His disciples. *“...the truth shall make you free.”* And **knowing that He is the Savior will set them free from the bondage of sin**, and free from the bondage of the Law which they spent their entire lives attempting to meet. He is encouraging these new believers.

<sup>33</sup>*They answered Him, “We are Abraham’s descendants, and have never been in bondage to anyone. How can you say, ‘You will be made free?’”* <sup>34</sup>*Jesus answered them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin.”* <sup>35</sup>*“And a slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever.”* <sup>36</sup>*“Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.”*

- *“We are Abraham’s descendants...”* Pride! The Jews believed they were better than everyone else because they alone (so they thought) had been given God’s Word and His promises.
- *“never been in bondage to anyone”* - They lied. They had been in bondage in Egypt and in Babylon, and as they spoke, they were under the iron rule of Rome. They have very short memories here, or an unwillingness to admit their history.
- We don’t know who Jesus directed His comments to, the unbelieving Pharisees, or the believing Pharisees. Perhaps both, because they were most likely not distinguished at this point, except to Jesus. When He made His comments about being free, they snapped back with non-truthful pride. They weren’t going to admit they’d ever been in bondage. That’s only for the lowest of the low - slaves.
- Jesus explains that **anyone is a slave if he is a sinner**. And that would be everyone. And a slave cannot “dwell” (stay long) in a master’s house, but a son can. We are the children, the adopted sons and daughters of the Father who owns the house. So if we are freed by the Master, we are indeed free. Not only are we freed from the bondage of sin, by the Son’s price paid for us, we are also now adopted heirs (the reference to being a son abiding in Father’s house, See Romans 5-8). We are not sinless, but blameless, free from the power of sin.



<sup>37</sup>*“I know that you are Abraham’s descendants, but you seek to kill Me, because My word has no place in you.”* <sup>38</sup>*“I speak what I have seen with My Father, and you do what you have seen with your father.”* <sup>39</sup>*They answered and said to Him, “Abraham is our father.”* *Jesus said to them, “If you were Abraham’s children, you would do the works of Abraham.”* <sup>40</sup>*“But now you seek to kill Me, a Man who has told you the truth which I heard from God. Abraham did not do this.”*

- Yes, they are the physical descendants of Abraham, something they took great pride in, obviously. But Jesus tells them they are **not Abraham’s spiritual descendants**, because they don’t do the same works (*Abraham was considered righteous for HIS FAITH, something these guys didn’t have.*)

- Jesus seems to be speaking to a brick wall here. Why? Because **His Father is not their father**. They don't know Him as Jesus does. Again, no relationship. And He knows their hearts. They are not only rejecting His claims, they want to kill Him. Jesus knows this.
- **"Abraham did not do this..."** interesting comment. Jesus is most likely referencing the time He met with Abraham in what we call a **Christophany** - an appearance in the flesh by Jesus. (See Genesis 17, when the LORD appeared to Abraham with two angels. They came disguised as three men. Abraham knew who this was, and he responded in faith because he had a relationship with God. These Pharisees did not.)

<sup>41</sup>**"You do the deeds of your father."** Then they said to Him, **"We were not born of fornication; we have one Father—God."** <sup>42</sup>Jesus said to them, **"If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and came from God; nor have I come of Myself, but He sent Me."** <sup>43</sup>**"Why do you not understand My speech? Because you are not able to listen to My word."**

- Jesus knows who their father is, but He hasn't yet revealed it. He's building to this. Now they change their tact and say God is their Father (as Jesus says of Himself) instead of Abraham. They are implying that they are righteous, and He comes from a scandalous past.
- **"We were not born of fornication;..."** This is a nasty comment about the rumors of Jesus' birth (they considered Him an "illegitimate" or bastard child, born out of wedlock).
- Jesus continues His march toward the famous statement at the end of this chapter. He has told these guys that they can't be Abraham's children, and now they can't be God's children either, because if they were, they would love Jesus because He comes from the Father. They don't. Little by little He is driving them and their arguments into the ground.
- **"Why do you not understand My speech?"** The word used here for speech implies his dialect, accent, or pronunciation. What he's really saying is **"what part of this don't you understand?"** This reminds us of some billboards that appeared around the country, mostly on the east coast that were signed by God. One says, *"what part of 'thou shalt not' don't you understand?"* – (signed) God. This is how Jesus is talking to them here. They've had these conversations before, many times. Each time Jesus tells them the same thing. The truth. And each time they don't believe.

<sup>44</sup>**"You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it."** <sup>45</sup>**"But because I tell the truth, you do not believe Me."** <sup>46</sup>**"Which of you convicts Me of sin? And if I tell the truth, why do you not believe Me?"** <sup>47</sup>**"He who is of God hears God's words; therefore you do not hear, because you are not of God."**

- **"You are of your father the devil,..."** Now Jesus reveals the identity of their father. He carefully and completely picked apart their lies. These people claimed Abraham as their father. Jesus gives a logical sequence of statements. Given the assumption that they were Abraham's children, they would do the **works of Abraham** (he believed in God, Gen 15:6). However, these people wanted to kill Jesus. Abraham didn't do that. The things they did were not in Abraham's nature, therefore they could not be Abraham's children. The things they did identified them as children of the enemy of this world. Jesus makes a very clear, logical argument.

- We are given a number of pieces of **information about the enemy** here: he is a murderer, from the beginning (*perhaps a reference to the lie in the garden that caused the death of all mankind, and they will be the same when they continue their push toward His death*); he does not stand in the truth, in fact, there is NO truth in him; he does what comes naturally – he lies. He is a liar, and the father of lies.
- **“Which of you convicts Me of sin? And if I tell the truth, why do you not believe Me?”** After identifying and describing these Jews' real father, Jesus asks any of them to show Him what sin He has committed. Obviously, no one can. He tells the truth, unlike them or their "father." They do not believe Him, therefore they are of the devil, not of God. They cannot identify even one sin, because this is the sinless lamb of God. His logical approach continues by asking them why, if they can't find even one sin, they don't believe Him.

<sup>48</sup>*Then the Jews answered and said to Him, “Do we not say rightly that You are a Samaritan and have a demon?”* <sup>49</sup>*Jesus answered, “I do not have a demon; but I honor My Father, and you dishonor Me.* <sup>50</sup>*“And I do not seek My own glory; there is One who seeks and judges.* <sup>51</sup>*“Most assuredly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he shall never see death.”* <sup>52</sup>*Then the Jews said to Him, “Now we know that You have a demon! Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and You say, ‘If anyone keeps My word he shall never taste death.’”*

- **Now they resort to name calling!** This is a heated, bitter, confrontation between Jesus and the Jews. Jesus was blunt and upfront with the religious leaders because they refused to accept His claims as the Messiah. There was no doubt about what He said He was, they just didn't believe Him. Now, because they have no logical reply, **they get nasty, because they can't answer his logic.** They are like cornered animals. (*How like us when we argue – when we can't defend ourselves, or remain calm in a logical discussion – we often resort to name calling and hurtful accusations. This is the human condition.*)
- Calling Jesus a demon-crazed Samaritan was about the **most insulting thing** His opponents could think to say. The Jews absolutely hated the Samaritans, who were considered lower than Gentiles, the worst of the worst (*they were the remnant of the Assyrian-conquered northern kingdom of Israel; they had intermarried and developed a “mixed” religion of paganism and Judaism. The Jews considered them a “bastard” group.*). These names showed their anger. It was the worst they could think of to call Him.
- **“I honor My Father, and you dishonor Me. And I do not seek My own glory; there is One who seeks and judges.”** Jesus' only desire is to honor His Father, and they are dishonoring Him. He is not seeking glory for Himself, but reminds these guys that there is ONE who seeks and judges, and although He desires that none are lost, it is a personal choice for everyone and these guys are skating on very thin ice. He may not be there at that moment to judge, but there is One who does.
- **“Most assuredly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he shall never see death.”** And now Jesus again reminds them of His entire message: if you believe me, and keep my word, you will never die (meaning the second death). You will not come under judgment. We have talked about the first death (physical death), and the second death previously. Jesus is not talking about physical death here, but eternal separation from God. The Pharisees are incapable of thinking in spiritual terms, apparently (just like Nicodemus, and the woman at the well [ch 3, 4]).
- **“Now we know that You have a demon!”** **At His last statement the Jews go nuts.** Abraham, considered the father of the Jews, and the model of faith, is dead, and so are the prophets. They are hopping mad now and throwing any argument out there.

- **"Keeping the word" is what these Pharisees were supposed to be good at** (in their own eyes). They spent their entire lives in this pursuit, thinking they could keep the Law and earn their salvation and entrance to heaven. Jesus in effect tells them that they are not keeping His Word, God's Word. They did not understand the spiritual nature of that Word. It wasn't about keeping the Law, mostly because they were completely incapable of that. No one can keep the Law perfectly, which is what God required. That is why we need the blood of Jesus to cover us and our sins. God required a right heart before Him, a heart that understands that we are sinful, in need of His gift of life. The Pharisees did not understand this, and worse, they had no desire to understand it. They were so filled with pride they could not see the truth. Here they are outraged and express their frustration and anger in the most base way.

<sup>53</sup>*"Are You greater than our father Abraham, who is dead? And the prophets are dead. Whom do You make Yourself out to be?"* <sup>54</sup>*Jesus answered, "If I honor Myself, My honor is nothing. It is My Father who honors Me, of whom you say that He is your God."* <sup>55</sup>*"Yet you have not known Him, but I know Him. And if I say, 'I do not know Him,' I shall be a liar like you; but I do know Him and keep His word."* <sup>56</sup>*"Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad."*

- **To the Jews, Abraham was their father, and Moses the giver of the Law.** Throughout this book we see them refer to Abraham and Moses. It is almost as if they exalt these mere men as if they are their gods. In a sense, they were. No one was greater than these two, in their opinions. Here they ask Jesus if He thinks He is greater than Abraham. And the sarcastic question **"Whom do You make Yourself out to be?"** translates into **"Just who do you think you are????!!!!!"** These Pharisees are beside themselves now. They keep asking who Jesus is, who He thinks He is, even though they've heard Him say it many times. They just can't get their minds (or their hearts) around the truth of who He is. He is the I AM, plain and simple.
- Jesus responds that He isn't trying to bring honor to Himself. He doesn't need it from men, because His Father, The Ancient of Days, does that for Him. Once again He tells these sputtering pride-filled men that they do not know God, probably the greatest insult to the religious Jews. He reminds these hypocrites that His Father is not their Father, and if He said that He didn't know Him, He would be lying, too. He DOES know Him. **He IS Him!** (Hard for us to understand, too. That's what faith is.) Insults are flying back and forth at this point. Jesus words were insulting because they were true.
- **"Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad."** Jesus knew Abraham. He appeared to him and talked with him in Genesis 18. Abraham knew about the coming Messiah, Jesus Himself, and would have rejoiced to be here to see Him in the flesh. But something a little more startling is the fact that Abraham DID see it! Abraham was physically dead (separated from the physical body), but he was in the presence of God.
- **COMMENTARY: Did Abraham ever see Christ? He certainly did. The appearance of God to people in the Old Testament was an appearance of Jesus Christ to these people. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him" (John 1:18). Then, too, although Abraham's body was buried there, yet Abraham was really not dead but was in the presence of God. Jesus makes this very clear, as recorded in Luke 20:38. "For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto him." (McGee)**
- **When God told Abraham to take his son Isaac to the top of Mt. Moriah** and sacrifice him, Abraham obeyed (Genesis 22:1-19). God spared Isaac by providing the ram in the thicket. In this way, and in ways that perhaps we do not know about, God taught Abraham about the coming sacrifice of another Son, God's own Son Jesus, for the sins of the world.

- Abraham seemed to have some understanding of this divine plan of redemption when he named the place “**Yahweh yireh**” (*I AM will provide*). And perhaps He revealed more when Abraham was in His presence, after his death. Jesus would, of course, know all about this.
- The REAL zinger from Jesus aimed at these guys is coming up in the next verse. Jesus has been hinting at this, and building toward his next astounding, in-your-face, statement.

<sup>57</sup>*Then the Jews said to Him, “You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?”*  
<sup>58</sup>*Jesus said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM.”* <sup>59</sup>*Then they took up stones to throw at Him; but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.*

- **“You are not yet 50 years old...”** What? Jesus claims to have seen or known Abraham? Completely impossible to them, so they respond with sarcasm. Compared to these “sages,” Jesus is considered very young. They make a derogatory statement about His young age, meaning He couldn’t really know anything. Like Nicodemus, like the woman at the well, all these guys are stuck in thinking in physical terms, not spiritual. But God is timeless, ageless, omniscient and omnipresent. This isn’t just about a spiritual “seeing.” Jesus, as God Almighty actually SAW Abraham. C.S. Lewis said Jesus was either a liar, a lunatic, or Lord. The Pharisees could not accept the last option, and believed He was both a liar and a lunatic.
- **“Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM.”** If there was any question at all about what Jesus was saying, there isn’t any now. **This is the most definitive declaration of His infinite identity He has ever made.** Before Abraham ever existed, I AM. That is profound, and profoundly blasphemous to the Pharisees. Jesus is clearly claiming to be the same I AM (Yahweh) of the burning bush of Exodus 3:14, when Moses asked who he should say had sent him. Jesus’ claim here is point blank. He is God, Yahweh, the I AM, of the Old Testament. This is one of the great declarations of the good news of Jesus – HE IS GOD!!
- The “liberals” inside and outside today’s church will teach that Jesus was a great teacher, but that He never claimed to be God. It is quite obvious that those who say this have never read this Gospel. The Jews understood perfectly what Jesus was saying. He indeed claimed to be God. He didn’t just “claim” it. He IS I AM.
- **“Then they took up stones to throw at Him;...”** Up until now the Jews responded with words, becoming more and more angry with more nasty responses. Now they respond with stones. They are ready to kill Him on the spot. Stone him! No more talk. They considered what He said blasphemy, and the penalty for this was stoning. They knew full well what He meant by His statement.
- **“...but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.** Even as they attempted to stone Him, Jesus made Himself inaccessible. He apparently walked right through them. This has happened several times, where the Jews attempt to kill Him on the spot, and He simply disappears.



- It would be interesting to know how God did that! Perhaps He made Himself invisible, or did a “freeze frame” on everyone so He could pass through. However He did it, it simply wasn’t the perfect time for Jesus to die...yet. That would happen at the precise moment God had ordained it.

## A SUMMARY OF THE CONFRONTATION BETWEEN JESUS AND THE RELIGIOUS JEWS

| Jesus told the Pharisees...                                           | The Pharisees responded...                                              |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| I know where I came from and where I'm going (8:14-18)                | You were born illegitimately (8:19)                                     |
| You do not know God (8:19)                                            | No response.                                                            |
| You will die in your sin (8:21, 24)                                   | Who are you? (8:25)                                                     |
| My truth will make you free (8:31-32)                                 | We've never been in bondage, we don't need freedom (8:33)               |
| You are slaves of sin (8:34-38)                                       | We are children of Abraham (8:39)                                       |
| You are murderers and liars, doing the deeds of your father (8:39-41) | We are not illegitimate (like you); besides, God is our Father (8:41)   |
| Your father is a murderer, the father of lies (8:44-45)               | You are a demon-possessed Samaritan (high insult, 8:48)                 |
| I have power even over death (8:49-51)                                | Who do you think you are? (8:51-54)                                     |
| My Father honors Me (as His Son) but you are liars (8:54-56)          | You're just a young upstart, yet You claim to have seen Abraham! (8:57) |
| I AM (8:58)                                                           | They picked up stones to kill him (8:59)                                |

### Only Jesus Backed Up His Claim

Many throughout history have tried to insist or prove that they are gods. But only Jesus actually demonstrated that He is God by His words and actions. He healed the sick, raised the dead, forgave sins, and lived what He taught. He fulfilled every word of the law without ever sinning. And ultimately, He proved His claim that He is the I AM, by overcoming death and rising again. No one else in history has ever done that. No one else *could* do it. All others have fallen short of God’s glory—except Jesus. The only way he could do this is to BE God. He is the I AM.

