



**Jesus, Just Who Is He?
The Pharisees Ask And Jesus Answers
John 8:30-59**

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We are still in Jerusalem at the Temple with Jesus. It is the 8th day of the Feast of Tabernacles, the extra day added on by the Torah as an additional Sabbath.

It has been a busy morning. Jesus came over from the Mount of Olives where He spent the night in prayer and, after coming into the courtyard of the women, began to teach.

Very quickly He drew a crowd and right in the middle of teaching came an attempt by the Pharisees to embarrass Him and obtain something they could arrest and kill Him for. This all centered around a woman caught in adultery.

It did not end well for the Pharisees as Jesus did not respond as they anticipated He would and instead they had to withdraw admitting that they did not meet the standard of the Torah to even be able to bring charges since they were involved in the set up and frame attempt to begin with. There is still hope for them since they were convicted by what Jesus said.



Jesus ended the trial with essentially a mistrial declaration and went back to teaching those who witnessed all these events take place.

Drawing on the lamps still burning from the previous evening and the Illumination Ceremony, Jesus announced He is the light of the world.

John 8:12

“Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, “I am the Light of the world; the one who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life.”” (NASB 2020)

Layered in His statement is something those remaining Pharisees, looking for something else to condemn Jesus with, picked up on. They heard the “I am” statement.

This begins an extended conversation, in front of everyone still, about who He is and who His Father is. In that conversation He accused them of being lost, which they are.

Jesus flat out tells them that He will be returning to heaven, but they are unable to follow Him since they do not even know the Father and as such are unbelievers. He concluded this portion of His conversation with them by letting them know at what moment they will know beyond any doubt that “I am.” It will happen at the crucifixion, an event still about six months in the future but the Pharisees are not sure what He is saying.

But when you add all the conversations and teaching together, there was an impact on those hearing. Not just the crowd but even among the Pharisees. We will pick up in verse 30.

John 8:30–33

“As He said these things, many came to believe in Him. So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, “If you continue in My word, then you are truly My disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” They answered Him, “We are Abraham’s descendants and have never been enslaved to anyone; how is it that You say, ‘You will become free’ ?”” (NASB 2020)

Jesus is now talking to those new believers who now believe in Him. But He is also talking to those who are still not there. Many believed, not all. Jesus just doesn’t want to win the debate, He wants to see those who were ready to argue with Him, become believers as well.

Jesus is inviting them to take the next step. Once we decide for Jesus Christ, it is important that we immediately begin to take action to solidify that decision. Satan will attack, we will see that. He will do everything in His power to make you and I question what it is we just did. To include using those who act like they believe but are not believers. Some of the Pharisees are masters at duplicity, and we will see that here. But new believers need to be disciplined.

CS Lewis made this point in his book, *The Screwtape Letters*. In a letter to Wormwood, who has just allowed his human charge to become a believer, Screwtape says the following:

I note with grave displeasure that your patient has become a Christian. Do not indulge the hope that you will escape the usual penalties; indeed, in your better moments, I trust you would hardly even wish to do so. In the meantime we must make the best of the situation. There is no need to despair; hundreds of these adult converts have been reclaimed after a brief sojourn in the Enemy’s camp and are now with us. All the habits of the patient, both mental and bodily, are still in our favour. (Lewis 1996, 5)

Jesus talked about this when He provided a parable about four types of soil.



Luke 8:11–15

“Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. The ones on the path are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. The ones on the rock are those who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy. But these have no root; they believe only for a while and in a time of testing fall away. As for what fell among the thorns, these are the ones who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature. But as for that in the good soil, these are the ones who, when they hear the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart and bear fruit with endurance.”
(NRSVue)

Jesus is wanting to help solidify the decision that has been made, just like we would as well. This is why we believe following up with new believers is so important. Jesus starts off by talking about what discipleship means. These are new believers, and He wants them to know that discipleship is a normal thing. Expect it to happen.

The way you know if you are now His disciple is simple, are you following His word? The word translated continue, used in the Greek, implies in its verb form there is a specific point where this begins but there is no end contemplated. It is an intentional continuous abiding, continuing in His word from the point of it beginning.

What Jesus is saying is that now that you believe, you will know you are a believer for sure if you now seek His word, listen to His word, and stay in His word. Believers continue in His word. We start at salvation and then just keep on keeping on in His word. This is why we do Bible study and why Midweek is in depth.

For us as believers, it is important that we abide in His word. That we are continuously and intentionally studying and making what His word says, a part of us. This means studying it, meditating on it and memorizing it. Being a disciple is not a spectator sport.

Something else we see here is a favorite verse to rip entirely out of context and use to prove whatever point you want to make about just about anything. “...and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

Today, in a world of “fluid” truth, after all your truth is your truth and my truth is my truth, as believers, we still hold that there is an absolute objective standard of truth that exists today. That is not real popular in the culture these days. The reality may be hard to hear. A recent book from Dr. George Barna tells us what we, as Biblical Christians, are up against today.

For some time, Americans have been turning their back on the notion that absolute moral truths exist. Millennials are leading the charge. Close to six out of 10 young adults (56%) contend that “identifying moral truth is up to each individual; there are no moral absolutes that apply to everyone, all the time.” The spirit of relativity has comfortably settled in among Millennials—although it should be noted that more than one-fifth of them (22%) have yet to figure out where they stand on moral truth. But among those who have taken a stand, rejecting rather than accepting moral absolutes is the dominant perspective by a 5:2 ratio (56% vs. 22%). (Barna 2023, 68)

What Jesus is saying here is that when we believe, when we come to Christ and if we continue in His word, then and only then will we know the truth. This is the truth in God’s word. Truth that does not change...ever.

God has never changed His view on sin, He still hates it, all of it. “Jesus does not imply that believers will never make a mistake or wrong decision, but one of the benefits associated with conversion is the



impartation of truth. We do not have to accept the changing philosophies of life. We have received truth and are able to discern truth.” (Benfield 2015, 493)

Because we are believers, we have the Holy Spirit in us. He guides us and directs us, with God’s word. To discern what truth is in a world that is busy redefining what truth is. There was someone else who also redefined what truth is and because our ancestors listened to him, we find we still struggle with what is truth today.

Genesis 3:1–5

“Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’” And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’” But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”” (ESV)

Here though, Jesus tells us that as we continue in His word, we will be able to know what true truth is. When we know that, then we are truly set free. We are no longer dominated by the sin nature following our urges, but now we take a step back and ask, what does Jesus say about this? What does the word have it in it to guide me in making a decision about this. Yes, we will blow it, but when we do, we have a promise.

1 John 1:9

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (ESV)

Stop, wait one moment Ken. I have this list of things that reflect what being a believer is all about. Yes, I know. I signed one of those in Bible School. We were told that motion picture theaters were the tool of the devil and we pledged that during the semester, we would not go to one. But Paramount would pay you to preview a movie and give them your opinion of it. Oh, and that Bible school now has a film school as part of it. But we were all given a legal list by the legalists that they thought would keep us looking like believers in the culture.

The idea is to create a means to keep you from feeling condemned by ensuring you felt condemned.

Romans 8:1–2

“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the life-giving Spirit in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death.” (NET 2nd ed.)

Some of those that Jesus is talking to in the Temple would make any legalist of today look like they have not even tried. He had Pharisees in the audience, and they cannot help but speak up.

John 8:33–36

“They answered Him, “We are Abraham’s descendants and have never been enslaved to anyone; how is it that You say, ‘You will become free’ ?” Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave of sin. Now the slave does not remain in the house forever; the son does remain forever. So if the Son sets you free, you really will be free.” (NASB 2020)

Fact check. Jesus has not used the word δούλος yet. This is a nice overly broad generalization from those who were not part of the new believer group that Jesus was actually talking to. A quick history lesson. The Jews were slaves to Egypt, and became subservient to Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, and now Rome. They are far from free.



But this is something that unbelievers will do if they hear you talking to those who believe. They will interrupt you and try to change the topic. Been there, had that done to me, more than once, and I do indeed have the t-shirt. Jesus ignores the comment and continues teaching.

Jesus feeds His detractors a bit of truth. They intentionally wanted to drive away from discipleship and truth by bringing up slavery. Jesus does not go for the low hanging fruit of slavery, instead He describes what the freedom He gives truly is.

Point one, anyone who sins is a slave. Because of Adam and Eve, we are all sinners, all listening to Him would know that, so it is not referenced by Jesus. But the sin issue is not just one of inheritance, it is also one of slavery. Now Jesus is using the word δούλος.

Everyone in His audience knows about slaves, some may have a few, some may be one.

They would know this fact even about a slave, they are never considered to be on a par as someone who is of the household. A son or daughter is always higher than a slave, even a bond slave. That is the word that Jesus is using here. “The Greek word doulos means “bond-slave”—literally “one tied to another.” The Greek word speaks of one who is subject to the will of his or her master.” (Carpenter and Comfort 2000, 393)

So here is truth, if you sin as a normal way of doing life, it is because you are a slave to sin. You cannot stop on your own, it owns you.

I hate that idea of something owning me, but without Christ, sin owns all of us. Even the Pharisees who have not moved to become believers. They are indeed slaves. He already told them back in verse 21 that they are not believers and would die in their sins. And now He tells them it is because they are slaves to sin, not Rome, but sin. That is the real problem for the unbeliever.

Slaves inherit nothing. But sons and daughters all stand to inherit from the Father as they are part of the family. Jesus is trying to move away from the misperception that simply being Jewish, saves. It does not. It never has. They are instead slaves to sin, as we all are without Jesus.

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.” (Osborne 2018, 223)

Jesus though is the Son, He has already said this by His consistently referring to His relationship with God the Father. In a typical Roman family, a son remains a son forever, but the slave could be sold. But the Son also inherits and with that comes the rights of the Father.

John 8:36

“So if the Son sets you free, you really will be free.” (NASB 2020)

Only by placing our trust in Christ can we be set free from the slavery of sin. In Him, we are now free to follow Him in obedience as we abide in Him and in His word.

Now Jesus talks right to His detractors.

John 8:37–38

“I know that you are Abraham’s descendants; yet you are seeking to kill Me, because My word has no place in you. I speak of the things which I have seen with My Father; therefore you also do the things which you heard from your father.” (NASB 2020)



Jesus is going to address the elephant in the room. Yes, you are Jewish, but being Jewish does not save you but being Jewish implies you follow the law. But they are not even doing that since they are seeking to commit murder.

Earlier, Jesus said that a sign of a believer was that His word continued in them and became a part of them. Impacting their life and day to day living and decision making. He has identified that yes, the Pharisees are Jews and as such have the Torah and should be following it, but they aren't. This is clearly exhibited in their murderous attitude towards Him. His word has no place at all in them and as such, their actions reflect who it is they are really following, and that isn't the Lord.

John 8:38

"I speak of the things which I have seen with My Father; therefore you also do the things which you heard from your father." (NASB 2020)

Jesus has clearly and consistently told the Pharisee He is simply speaking and doing those things He has seen from the Father. Since they had brought up the entire parentage thing earlier in verse 19, Jesus is bringing that topic up again. He tells them they are following their father, and that is not God.

These are religious professionals after all, if it isn't God then, wait a minute. He says we are following the other guy.

Based on that thought pattern, the next outburst makes sense. And remember, those that Jesus is teaching, well they are all listening in on this too.

John 8:39–41

"They answered and said to Him, "Abraham is our father." Jesus said to them, "If you are Abraham's children, do the deeds of Abraham. But as it is, you are seeking to kill Me, a man who has told you the truth, which I heard from God; this Abraham did not do. You are doing the deeds of your father." They said to Him, "We were not born as a result of sexual immorality; we have one Father: God.'" (NASB 2020)

No new argument here. Why they say this again is strange, but Jesus is now in full control of the conversation and is directing it to the destination He has intended or it. This is not going to make many friends for Him in the religious establishment.

Jesus simply doubles down on what the Law says. Here is what the Pharisees are saying, or at least implying.

If we are Abraham's children, then, since He was a friend of God (Isaiah 41:8), we are too since we are descended from him.

What Jesus is saying though is one, agreeing that there is a spiritual component to this discussion, but two, their deeds point to who it is they are truly friends of, and that isn't God. If they were really Abraham's kids, then they would act like Abraham and do his deeds. Instead, they are into murder, lying, gas lighting and overall hostility to what it is God is doing.

Jesus attacks their claim to salvation by proxy. They have conveniently forgotten about Abraham being saved by His faith.

Jesus points out He is a man, but He has also already said that He is the "I am."

Since Jesus went back to the older argument where they were questioning His parentage, using some of the talking points they had, and since there is nothing else to go on, they go back to those talking points.



Jesus has directly attacked their character, so they will do the same.

John 8:41–44

“You are doing the deeds of your father.” They said to Him, “We were not born as a result of sexual immorality; we have one Father: God.” Jesus said to them, “If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I came forth from God and am here; for I have not even come on My own, but He sent Me. Why do you not understand what I am saying? It is because you cannot listen to My word. You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he tells a lie, he speaks from his own nature, because he is a liar and the father of lies.” (NASB 2020)

Once again, they accuse Jesus of being born under questionable circumstances implying that His mother engaged in adultery, and He was the result of that union. Jesus now has them exactly where He wanted them. He is going to show to all who are listening just how bankrupt these so called religious professionals are. They have held themselves up as the example of law keeping, yet they are not even saved.

There has already been the exposure of their hypocrisy as a result of the abortive attempt to corner Jesus with the woman caught in adultery.

That ended up with those Pharisees and Scribes attached to the incident having to back away from the attempt under a cloud of being sinners and possibly involved in the same sin that the accused was involved in.

Those remaining Pharisees did not learn from the interaction. This is not unusual. Those involved doing the biddings of the enemy many times simply double down without any new information. As if by doing so makes their position more correct than it was the first time. It still seems to be a bit, well, crazy.

We see this today in our culture as unbelievers “do not seek to directly deprive Christians of their rights, but they are comfortable with restricting the rights of Christians to express their values in the public sphere as long as there are symbolic “non-bigoted” justifications for this. Regulating how Christians can worship is hard to justify unless one is overtly bigoted. Furthermore, this action would directly contradict the value of religious neutrality that individuals with anti-Christian bias tend to espouse. But they can use claims of religious neutrality to justify measures that inhibit the ability of Christians to live out their beliefs beyond their church or home. Rather than seeking to directly outlaw Christianity, they seek to drive Christians back into their homes and churches. (Yancy 2015, 43-44)

But here is the thing, they really do try to limit how and where we worship as a church. In the process of launching Calvary Chapel Martin County, I have learned that being ghosted by realtors representing those with property for lease, is the rule if you are a Church. Rather than cross a line that might get them in trouble legally, they simply don't call you back.

And here is the thing, many who I have talked to, who later cease returning phone calls, insist they are believers and go to XYZ Church, yet they disappear very quickly.

Jesus told us that as His disciples, we would get treated just like He was. The Pharisees wanted Him canceled, and they were at least religious professionals. Why would we expect anything better when dealing with the world?

The Pharisees have just told Jesus that God is their Father. He has a word for them regarding who their real daddy is.



John 8:42–44

“Jesus said to them, “If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I came forth from God and am here; for I have not even come on My own, but He sent Me. Why do you not understand what I am saying? It is because you cannot listen to My word. You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he tells a lie, he speaks from his own nature, because he is a liar and the father of lies.” (NASB 2020)

Before, Jesus hinted at the problem existing with the Pharisees. We need to remember; this is not a time of Jesus only problem.

We have those even today who say they represent Jesus, but don't. Peter did warn us.

2 Peter 2:1–3

“But there were also false prophets in Israel, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will cleverly teach destructive heresies and even deny the Master who bought them. In this way, they will bring sudden destruction on themselves. Many will follow their evil teaching and shameful immorality. And because of these teachers, the way of truth will be slandered. In their greed they will make up clever lies to get hold of your money. But God condemned them long ago, and their destruction will not be delayed.” (NLT)

Per Jesus, the bottom line for the Pharisees is they are not believers, they are not spiritual. They are not even capable to listen to His word since they are answering to another master. If God were their Father, as they allege, then they would embrace Him and His word, but God is not their Father. They are busy following the guidance of their father, the devil.

The children of God will so love the truth that they will believe in Jesus; the children of the devil will be so characterized by lies that they will not be able to accept the truth, precisely because it is the truth. This explains unbelief. (Carson 1991, 353-354)

John 8:45–47

“But because I say the truth, you do not believe Me. Which one of you convicts Me of sin? If I speak truth, why do you not believe Me? The one who is of God hears the words of God; for this reason you do not hear them, because you are not of God.” (NASB 2020)

Imagine being one of those who showed up earlier in the morning to be taught by Jesus. You have seen a group of Pharisees be embarrassed and must leave under a cloud. Pharisees can sin?

You listened to a back forth between other Pharisees and Jesus becoming convinced He is the light of the world.

Then He started to teach some more only to be interrupted again and not only are the Pharisees capable of sin, but they are actually in the service of the devil. Today was not a day to miss Temple.

Now Jesus has flat out stated that the Pharisees, who say they serve God, don't, not really.

What else is there. Name calling, unforgivable sin committing, just another Sabbath day in Jerusalem.

John 8:48–53

“The Jews answered and said to Him, “Do we not rightly say that You are a Samaritan, and You have a demon?” Jesus answered, “I do not have a demon; on the contrary, I honor My Father, and you dishonor Me. But I am not seeking My glory; there is One who seeks it, and judges. Truly, truly I say to you, if



anyone follows My word, he will never see death.” The Jews said to Him, “Now we know that You have a demon. Abraham died, and the prophets as well; and yet You say, ‘If anyone follows My word, he will never taste of death.’ You are not greater than our father Abraham, who died, are You? The prophets died too. Whom do You make Yourself out to be?” (NASB 2020)

The response, which is lies, only proves that they really are serving the father of lies. Jesus only responds to the second allegation denying that and once again stating He is serving His Father. “As Jesus asserts that his own honour will be upheld and vindicated by the ultimate judge, God, the dispute’s accusations and counter-accusations are now explicitly placed in the context of the cosmic trial, and the reminder of this motif underlines in particular that the opponents are being judged, as their accusations expose their unbelief.” (Lincoln 2005, 275)

Jesus knows the conversation is near the end, so He speaks to those who He was teaching, the new believers, and of course the Pharisees still do not get it and must jump in...again.

John 8:51–53

“Truly, truly I say to you, if anyone follows My word, he will never see death.” The Jews said to Him, “Now we know that You have a demon. Abraham died, and the prophets as well; and yet You say, ‘If anyone follows My word, he will never taste of death.’ You are not greater than our father Abraham, who died, are You? The prophets died too. Whom do You make Yourself out to be?” (NASB 2020)

Keeping His word once again is the idea. If we believe in Him, we will indeed keep His word and for those who do, eternal life is promised.

The Pharisees simply cannot let that stand. They interpreted what He said as physical death, not spiritual. How can someone follow your word and never physically die? They still are not fully in the conversation.

Again, as we share with those who do not know Jesus, we must recall that sometimes the reaction to what we say is because they simply are not coming from our square. Be prepared to explain what you mean.

Jesus just said His words had the power to prevent physical death, or so the Pharisees think. They are not in the same conversation Jesus is having with them. They even go so far as to ask a question fully expecting Him to say no, I am not greater than Abraham. But then they ask “the” question. “Who do you make yourself out to be?”

It appears they have not been listening. Let's recap, John 8:12, “I am the light of the world.” John 8:24, “unless you believe I am you will die in your sins.” John 8:38 “When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am.”

Time to make a clear definitive statement.

John 8:54–59

“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’; and you have not come to know Him, but I know Him. And if I say that I do not know Him, I will be a liar like you; but I do know Him, and I follow His word. Your father Abraham was overjoyed that he would see My day, and he saw it and rejoiced.” So the Jews said to Him, “You are not yet fifty years old, and You have seen Abraham?” Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am.” Therefore they picked up stones to throw at Him, but Jesus hid Himself and left the temple grounds.” (NASB 2020)



Jesus is God and He has clearly claimed that fact. The Pharisees did not believe that, but some of the crowd who were listening in on this conversation did. Note that it was the Pharisees who wanted to stone Him, no one else.

What Jesus left them with was a clear statement. They wanted to know who He is, and He told them four times in chapter 8, finally so clearly, they reacted with murderous intent. This is not a conversation they would forget.

It is also a conversation we cannot forget either. Just who is Jesus?

If He is who He says He is, then He is God, and we must worship Him as such. The only other option left open, based on His own words, is that He was a lunatic.

Would a good man or a good teacher claim to be God, not once but four times, clearly and definitively to a group that clearly knew what He was saying? If He is God, then yes. But if not, then why would He say this?

Who is He to you?

Romans 3:21–24

“But now God has shown us a way to be made right with him without keeping the requirements of the law, as was promised in the writings of Moses and the prophets long ago. We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are. For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God’s glorious standard. Yet God, in his grace, freely makes us right in his sight. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins.” (NLT)

Romans 10:9–13

“If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by openly declaring your faith that you are saved. As the Scriptures tell us, “Anyone who trusts in him will never be disgraced.” Jew and Gentile are the same in this respect. They have the same Lord, who gives generously to all who call on him. For “Everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved.”” (NLT)

ABC’s of Salvation

- A. Acknowledge that you are a sinner, tell Him that.
- B. Believe that Jesus died on the cross for our sin and that He rose from the dead.
- C. Confess that Jesus is Lord. Tell someone about what you have done.



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