



+ **YOU**

Fall 2023

Confident in the Face of Hard Questions

Sermon Title: Evidence of Knowing Christ

To be used with Session #5: Won't All People Ultimately Go to Heaven?

Scripture: John 8:31-36

Connection with Unit Theme: To complement the Bible study *Won't All People Ultimately Go to Heaven?* this sermon expounds upon the teaching of Jesus as He provided characteristics of what a true follower looks like. Today's listener will be challenged to exam his or her own life considering the teachings of Jesus as not everyone will ultimately go to heaven. The ones who will go to heaven are the ones who know Jesus personally and thereby show evidence of knowing Him.

Introduction: Evidence is an important word when deciding if something is true or false. If someone is making a claim and can provide evidence, then the claim can be labeled as being true. If, however, there is no evidence, then the claim will most likely be considered false.

When Jesus was here on earth, He was consistently frustrating the Pharisees, who were the religious leaders of His time. The passage we are studying today is an exchange between Jesus and the Pharisees. In this passage, we see things that Jesus pointed to that show evidence of someone knowing Him as Lord and Savior. The Pharisees' frustration was that their lives did not have this evidence and Jesus was pointing this out to them.

1. A true follower of Jesus will continue in God's Word (John 8:31).

The first piece of evidence in knowing if someone truly knows Jesus and will ultimately spend eternity in heaven with Him is if that person continues in God's Word. We have all most likely been guilty of the dreaded New Year's resolution of exercising, spending more time with the family, and so forth. Then a few months in, we find ourselves in the same rut. According to Jesus, His followers will break out of the rut of not spending time with Him and will "continue in [His] word."

Before we all get discouraged, let's examine this verse. Jesus said His followers would continue in His word. This shows that He desires an ongoing relationship with us. He did not invite us to continue in the words of others about Him. The invitation is to spend time with Him. A true disciple of Jesus will have a longing to spend time with Jesus by spending time in His word.

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2. A true follower of Jesus will know the truth (John 8:32-33).

We have looked at the word “know” together over the past few weeks. We have learned that this is more than simply head knowledge, but rather a personal understanding based upon first-hand experience. This is much more than book smarts. The word that Jesus used shows a knowledge based upon first-hand experience.

Context is once again a key to understanding this passage. Jesus said that His disciples would know the truth. He spoke this to a group of religious leaders who may well have memorized the whole of the Hebrew Scriptures (what we today call the Old Testament). Jesus’s words were a shocking statement to them based upon their response to Jesus. They were trusting in their book smarts to earn them a place in heaven. Jesus loved them enough to tell them that book smarts were not sufficient; they needed a relationship with Him. True followers of Jesus show evidence of knowing the One who is the way, the truth, and the life.

3. A true follower of Jesus will live in freedom (John 8:34-36)

The modern-day hymn writer Chris Tomlin added a chorus to John Newton’s *Amazing Grace*: “My chains are gone, I’ve been set free. My God, my Savior has ransomed me.” Prior to coming to faith in Jesus, our master is sin. When we are saved by grace, through faith, we are set free from sin and are made alive in Christ. We learn this from Jesus when He said that those who know Him personally are free.

The Pharisees did not appreciate this teaching because they were relying upon their heritage and knowledge for freedom. Jesus, however, told them that freedom could only be found in Him. When someone has a relationship with Christ, the evidence of this freedom is seen by those around them.

Conclusion: We started this message by talking about the importance of evidence. When someone has evidence about a specific matter, then that person can prove a fact. Let’s conclude this message with a question. Is there enough evidence to convict us of being a follower of Jesus? Jesus said that those who truly know and follow Him will continue in His word, know the truth, and live in freedom. Do we each have enough evidence to convict us of these things? This is not about earning one’s salvation, as this is impossible. It is, however, about having *evidence* of salvation. If the answer is yes, then let’s praise Jesus for our salvation. If, however, this is not the case, then please do not leave today without the assurance and eternal security that is only found in and through a relationship with Jesus.

Author Bio

Tod Tanner has degrees from Texas A&M University, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He has pastored churches in Texas and Tennessee. He and his family reside in Wartrace, Tennessee, and he serves as the Vice President of the Tennessee Baptist Foundation.

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