



I AM (John 8:31-58)

John's Gospel spotlights the identity of Jesus. Today we examine the significance of the most incredible identity claim Jesus ever made, the same claim that ultimately condemned the servant-king to death.

BIG TRUTH Disciples of Jesus are Devoted to Jesus

John 8:30-34 (CSB) ³⁰ As he was saying these things, many believed in him. ³¹ Then Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, "If you **continue in my word**, you really are **my disciples**. ³² You will **know the truth**, and **the truth will set you free**." ³³ "We are descendants of Abraham," they answered him, "and we have never been enslaved to anyone. How can you say, 'You will become free?'" ³⁴ Jesus responded, "Truly I tell you, **everyone who commits sin is a slave of sin**."

According to Jesus, the mark of a true disciple is that they "**continue in my word**" (to trust and obey what Jesus says). This is not a limited time of obedience, but a lifestyle of obedience.

One who claims to be devoted to Jesus, but can't tell you WHO He IS or what He SAYS, is NOT His disciple.

v32 You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.

This statement is embossed on the seals of colleges and universities¹, but this doesn't mean that knowledge, diplomas, or degrees is the key to freedom. Neither was Jesus saying that *telling the truth* will always set you free. (Telling the truth can sometimes get you *INTO* trouble.) And while you should tell the truth, that's NOT what Jesus was talking about.

Those who are devoted to Jesus don't just know WHAT the truth is, but they **know WHO the TRUTH is** - JESUS!

THEY will be **set free**. *Set free from WHAT?* That's the same question many the audience that day were asking.

v33 We have never been enslaved to anyone.

Remember that the *Festival of Shelters* was a celebration of God's Presence and provision following 430 years of slavery in Egypt. By the time of Jesus, the Jewish people had been slaves in Assyria & Babylon, Persia, Greece, and at the present time they were under occupation of the Roman Empire. Despite their history of slavery, the Jewish people found hope that they were **descendants of Abraham**. They trusted that God's promise to Abraham was God's promise to THEM, which gave them a sense of national freedom, pride, and the unbreakable resilience to worship the One true God of Abraham, Isaac, & Jacob.

But then Jesus clarifies that He's not talking about being enslaved *because of others' actions*, but *being enslaved because of their own/OUR own actions*.

v34 Everyone who commits sin is a slave of sin.

We have ALL been slaves of sin, and slaves are stuck, unable to suddenly free themselves.

John 8:35-36 (CSB) ³⁵ A slave does not remain in the household forever, but a son does remain forever. ³⁶ So if the Son sets you free, you really will be free.

Jewish people, being sons & daughters of Abraham, did NOT make them sons & daughters of God. They were **SLAVES OF SIN**. And slaves could be sold & traded and do **not remain in the household forever**. But a SON *does* have freedom and security **in the household forever**. What is the Father's is HIS.

And THIS is what Jesus offers: **FREEDOM to SLAVES! If the Son sets you free, you really will be free**. And it's even better than that, because God adopts *slaves* as *sons & daughters*!!! Early in John's Gospel he writes:

John 1:12 (CSB) ¹² But to all who did receive him, **he gave them the right to be children of God**, to those who believe in his name,

YOUR NOTES

¹ Gerald L. Borchert, *John 1-11*, vol. 25A, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 303.

John 8:37-41 (CSB) ³⁷ I know you are descendants of Abraham, but you are trying to kill me because my word has no place among you. ³⁸ I speak what I have seen in the presence of the Father; so then, you do what you have heard from your father." ³⁹ "Our father is Abraham," they replied. "If you were Abraham's children," Jesus told them, "you would do what Abraham did. ⁴⁰ But now you are trying to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. Abraham did not do this. ⁴¹ You're doing what your father does." "We weren't born of sexual immorality," they said. "We have one Father—God."

What Abraham did was hear from God, and do what He said. But these people who claim, "**Our father is Abraham,**" are not listening to God, as he did. They are following the example of their true father, and we will hear his identity in just a moment.

Since Jesus says that Abraham is NOT their father, they respond...**We have one Father—God.** They were likely leaning on Scriptures like this:

Exodus 4:22 (LEB) And you must say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says Yahweh, "**Israel is my son,** my firstborn.'

Jesus notes being part of the people of Israel, and claiming God as their father, doesn't mean God IS their Father.

John 8:42-44 (CSB) ⁴² Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, because I came from God and I am here. For I didn't come on my own, but he sent me. ⁴³ Why don't you understand what I say? Because you cannot listen to my word. ⁴⁴ **You are of your father the devil,** and you want to carry out 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 tells a lie, he speaks from his own nature, because he is a liar and the father of lies.

YOUR NOTES

I AM (Make sure to John 8:39-59.)

HIGHLIGHT #1

John 8:51-53 (CSB) ⁵¹ Truly I tell you, **if anyone keeps my word**, he will never see death." ⁵² Then the Jews said, "Now we know you have a demon. Abraham died and so did the prophets...⁵³ Are you greater than our father Abraham who died? And the prophets died. Who do you claim to be?"

Jesus is not guaranteeing a pass on *physical* death. He is speaking of *those who keep his word* who **will never see spiritual death** - they will experience eternal life.

Yes, Jesus was **greater than Abraham** and **the prophets**, since He is *the Creator of all life!* (John 1:3) And what Jesus is about to say invites the full fury of the religious leaders.

HIGHLIGHT #2

John 8:56-57 (CSB) ⁵⁶ Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day; he saw it and was glad." ⁵⁷ The Jews replied, "You aren't fifty years old yet, and you've seen Abraham?"

Abraham saw Jesus' day? What kind of crazy claim is this? That's exactly what **the Jews** thought(* "the Jews" is the typical term used by the author to refer to the religious leaders who stood against Jesus).

Abraham was the major actor in the drama where God spared his son Isaac, by providing a substitute sacrifice. Further, God had promised Abraham that his family would become a great nation that would bless the world (Gen. 12:2-3). And *that promise was ultimately fulfilled by the life, death, & resurrection of Jesus - the ultimate substitute sacrifice.* Like other Old Testament believers,

These all died in faith, although they had not received the things that were promised. But they saw them from a distance...
(Hebrews 11:13a CSB)

HIGHLIGHT #3

John 8:58-59 ⁵⁸ Jesus said to them, "Truly I tell you, **before Abraham was, I AM.**" ⁵⁹ So they picked up stones to throw at him. But Jesus was hidden and went out of the temple.

What was Jesus claiming? Jesus was claiming to be the **I AM** who spoke to Moses from the burning bush, the Creator of all mankind! This was too much for religious leaders to take as they thought it was *blasphemous* (speaking evil of or claiming to be Yahweh). The Scriptural mandate for those who blasphemed Yahweh's name was swift & sure.

Leviticus 24:16a (LEB) And **he who blasphemes Yahweh's name** certainly shall be put to death; the whole community certainly shall **stone him**...

Once again, Jesus slips away. It is NOT yet time for Jesus to be sacrificed. But the time is coming, when this most incredible identity claim ultimately condemned the servant-King to death.

The Christian must not waiver to 1) Believe WHO Jesus is and 2) Obey what Jesus says.

BIG TRUTH Disciples of Jesus are Devoted to Jesus

QUESTION: **ARE YOU a DISCIPLE of Jesus?**

🌟 **Tony Evans** *We want God in the vicinity. We just don't want Him taking over.*²

* **Want to talk further?** Please contact **Jackie** (850-673-1582), **Justin** (704-618-6144), **Christy** (673-9764), or another follower of Jesus soon! Or call our **deacons & wives:** Tom & Martha Waddail, Steve & Debbie Bass, Freddy & Joyce Howard, Jere & Darlene Burnette, Alan & Christy Androski, Willy & Melissa Gamalero.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. **Read John 8:30-31.** According to Jesus, what is characteristic of those who are really His disciples? Explain what this means. (*Recall today's BIG TRUTH.)
2. **Read John 8:32.** What is the difference between how people in our time have used, "the truth will set you free" and what Jesus meant by it?
3. Scanning back through today's text (John 8:31-59), share which claims of Jesus are most significant and why.
4. What challenged or encouraged you from today's teaching? (Look back over your notes and share!)
5. Pray for one another this week. Consider texting or calling same sex believers to pray & share together this week.