

CONCERNING THE WAY

November 10, 2009

LESSON 81: THE GOSPEL OF JOHN



Chapter 7 – Christ the Divider

The popular conception of Jesus is that He united people by teaching about love and peace. The fact is, though, that He divided people. In this chapter we see clearly how Jesus divided people by what He taught. There are people who believed Him and accepted that He was the Messiah and people that rejected Him outright. Then there were some who professed to believe Him, but only believed in Him because of the miracles they saw Him do. The only way we can have unity is in a right belief about Jesus Christ.

John 7:1 After this Jesus traveled throughout Galilee. He stayed out of Judea because the Jewish leaders wanted to kill him.

The time spread between last chapter and this one would be about six months, since chapter six took place just before Passover, which is in the spring. The Feast of Tabernacles (next verse) is in the fall. In that time Jesus traveled around Galilee.

John 7:2 Now the Jewish feast of Tabernacles was near.

This feast is today called Sukkot, or Feast of Booths, and is a week-long thanksgiving celebration for the harvest, a commemoration of the Israelites wandering in the wilderness, and looking forward to God's Messianic Kingdom. When the Jews came out of Egypt they were told to make little shelters, or tents, and sit down and just rest. It is celebrated in the autumn in September or October (on our calendar) after the harvest. If you're in Israel during this time, you see little booths constructed inside or outside of homes, apartment buildings, restaurants, or little lean-to's in the fields where workers can rest in the shade.

John 7:3-5 So Jesus' brothers advised him, "Leave here and go to Judea so your disciples may see your miracles that you are performing. (4) For no one who seeks to make a reputation for himself does anything in secret. If you are doing these things, show yourself to the world." (5) (For not even his own brothers believed in him.)

These were Jesus' half-brothers, and apparently they hung out with Jesus sometimes. Some still try to maintain the perpetual virginity of Mary, but it's pretty ridiculous. There are too many scriptures that mention that Jesus had siblings (John 2:12, Mark 3:21, 31-35, 6:3). Matthew even mentions His brother's names:

Matthew 13:55-56 Isn't this the carpenter's son? Isn't his mother named Mary? And aren't his brothers James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas? (56) And aren't all his sisters here with us?"

They may not have known that it was dangerous for Him in Judea. They wanted Jesus to showcase Himself, which tells us they didn't really understand who He was and what His purpose was, as verse 5 says. Do you think they wanted to hitch their wagon to His star? They may have believed in Him as the Messiah, but not in a spiritual sense. It wasn't until after His resurrection that at least some of them truly believed in Him.

There are different kinds of belief, as we have discussed before. There is a surface belief, a head knowledge, and there is a spiritual belief, where you truly understand and accept what Jesus says about Himself, which includes trusting His sacrifice for your sins.

John 7:6-7 So Jesus replied, "My time has not yet arrived, but you are ready at any opportunity! (7) The world cannot hate you, but it hates me, because I am testifying about it that its deeds are evil.

Jesus was probably saying, "If you want to go to Judea and tell about me, go ahead and do that, but it's not time for me to reveal myself as the Messiah to Judea." He knew they wanted to kill Him because of what He was saying about them and about what He was saying about Himself.

If members of your family ridicule or don't understand your faith, you're not alone. Even Jesus' own family didn't understand who He was and what He taught. The world hates Christians and Christianity more and more, because they speak out against the evil in the world. We are being marginalized more and more, and I think eventually laws will be passed to shut us up for good.

John 7:8-10 You go up to the feast yourselves. I am not going up to this feast because my time has not yet fully arrived." (9) When he had said this, he remained in Galilee. (10) But when his brothers had gone up to the feast, then Jesus himself also went up, not openly but in secret.

So Jesus came in secret, either by Himself, or with the Twelve. He knew if He went with all of His followers, it would cause a commotion and the religious leaders would try to kill Him.

John 7:11-13 So the Jewish leaders were looking for him at the feast, asking, "Where is he?" (12) There was a lot of grumbling about him among the crowds. Some were saying, "He is a good man," but others, "He deceives the common people." (13) However, no one spoke openly about him for fear of the Jewish leaders.

You can see that the Jewish leaders were indeed looking for Him. Verse 13 is saying people were afraid to say anything positive about Him because they were afraid of what the Jewish leaders might do to them. They held a lot of power in Jewish society.

John 7:14-15 When the feast was half over, Jesus went up to the temple courts and began to teach. (15) Then the Jewish leaders were astonished and said, "How does this man know so much when he has never had formal instruction?"

How does He know so much, He's never been to Rabbinical school! In those days experienced Rabbis, authorities in scripture and Jewish Law, trained groups of disciples in the scriptures at a Rabbinical college. That was the "formal" education. If someone had not graduated from one of those schools, they would not have any credibility.

John 7:16-17 So Jesus replied, "My teaching is not from me, but from the one who sent me. (17) If anyone wants to do God's will, he will know about my teaching, whether it is from God or whether I speak from my own authority.

Jesus' knowledge came straight from God. A person who has an open heart, who really wants to know God, will know Him. There has to be a willingness in one's heart before you can even begin to understand the Bible.

John 7:18 The person who speaks on his own authority desires to receive honor for himself; the one who desires the honor of the one who sent him is a man of integrity, and there is no unrighteousness in him.

There are some who speak from their own ideas, from their own pride, to gain glory for themselves. The one who truly wants to do God's will only wants the honor of God, not the honor of men.

John 7:19 Hasn't Moses given you the law? Yet not one of you keeps the law! Why do you want to kill me?"

They tried to use the Law against Him, but they themselves didn't keep the Law, so it doesn't make sense that they would try to kill Him. They had the written Law, but they only studied on the surface, just the words. They did not internalize it, did not pay any attention to the spiritual aspects of the Law.

John 7:20 The crowd answered, "You're possessed by a demon! Who is trying to kill you?"

Most of the crowd was probably not aware of the plot the Jewish religious leaders had to kill Jesus. So they couldn't understand why He was asking this.

John 7:21-23 Jesus replied, "I performed one miracle and you are all amazed. (22) However, because Moses gave you the practice of circumcision (not that it came from Moses, but from the forefathers), you circumcise a male child on the Sabbath. (23) But if a male child is circumcised on the Sabbath so that the law of Moses is not broken, why are you angry with me because I made a man completely well on the Sabbath?"

Jesus is speaking of the healing of the paralytic man He healed on the Sabbath. This was why the Jewish leaders wanted to kill Him, they couldn't let it go.

"Jesus argues that if the Sabbath law may rightly be suspended for the removal of a small piece of tissue from one part of the body, it cannot be wrong to heal a man's whole body on the Sabbath day. This type of argument, in fact was used by some rabbis to justify medical treatment in a case of urgency on the Sabbath, but Jesus uses it to justify an act of healing whether the case is urgent or not." F.F. Bruce

John 7:24 Do not judge according to external appearance, but judge with proper judgment."

This is the heart of the problem right here; they could not get past the external. They clung to tradition and ceremony, and only looked at the material. They could not look at things with a spiritual eye. Many people have this problem today, we tend to judge people by how they look or because of their position or credentials. A doctorate in theology or the Bible does not guarantee that a person has a right relationship with God or even accurate knowledge about Him. Academic credentials are not important to God. He wants people with right heart attitudes, people who realize they need Him and who are not caught up in the pride and foolishness of the world.

John 7:25-27 Then some of the residents of Jerusalem began to say, "Isn't this the man they are trying to kill? (26) Yet here he is, speaking publicly, and they are saying nothing to him. Do the rulers really know that this man is the Christ? (27) But we know where this man comes from. Whenever the Christ comes, no one will know where he

comes from."

The rumor spread that the rulers were trying to kill Jesus. The tradition had grown among the Jews that the Messiah would come mysteriously, out of nowhere. These residents of Jerusalem thought that because they knew where Jesus came from, He couldn't be the Messiah. This shows they didn't know their own scriptures. One of their own prophets predicted He would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2).

John 7:28-29 Then Jesus, while teaching in the temple courts, cried out, "You both know me and know where I come from! And I have not come on my own initiative, but the one who sent me is true. You do not know him, (29) but I know him, because I have come from him and he sent me."

Jesus responded to both the residents and the rulers who were in His audience in what seems to be kind of an ironic way. "So you think you know where I came from, do you? On the physical level they knew where He came from, but on the spiritual level they just didn't get it. They didn't know where He really came from and they didn't know the Father who sent Him.

His words are so strong that they don't leave any wiggle room. We must all decide if He is the Messiah or not. You can see already by this 7th chapter of John that Jesus was not just a good teacher. As C.S. Lewis said, He has not left us that option. He either was a madman or a liar, or He was who He said He was, the Son of God.

John 7:30-31 So then they tried to seize Jesus, but no one laid a hand on him, because his time had not yet come. (31) Yet many of the crowd believed in him and said, "Whenever the Christ comes, he won't perform more miraculous signs than this man did, will he?"

Many of the crowd apparently were convinced that He was the Messiah, and did believe what He was saying.

John 7:32 The Pharisees heard the crowd murmuring these things about Jesus, so the chief priests and the Pharisees sent officers to arrest him.

In response to the fact that He was convincing many in the crowd that He was the Messiah, the Jewish leaders said, "That's it, we've got to get Him out of here, bring Him in."

John 7:33-36 Then Jesus said, "I will be with you for only a little while longer, and then I am going to the one who sent me. (34) You will look for me but will not find me, and where I am you cannot come." (35) Then the Jewish leaders said to one another, "Where is he going to go that we cannot find him? He is not going to go to the Jewish people dispersed among the Greeks and teach the Greeks, is he? (36) What did he mean by saying, 'You will look for me but will not find me, and where I am you cannot come'?"

The clueless Jewish leaders couldn't understand what He was saying, it was almost comical! He was saying He was going back to the Heavenly Father and they couldn't go with Him. Then He apparently gave them the slip again, because He wasn't arrested.

John 7:37-39 On the last day of the feast, the greatest day, Jesus stood up and shouted out, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me, and (38) let the one who believes in me drink. Just as the scripture says, 'From within him will flow rivers of living water.' " (39) (Now he said this about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were going to receive, for the Spirit had not yet been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.)

On the 1st day of the Feast of Tabernacles, a priest read Zechariah 14:8. For seven days, the priests led a procession from the Pool of Siloam through the Water Gate to the Temple. One priest carried water from the pool in a golden pitcher. When they got there, they circled the altar, and the priest with the pitcher poured the water in a basin at the side of the altar. This water offering by the priests helped the Jews remember how God had provided water to their ancestors during the time they wandered in the desert. This ceremony was more than about praying for rain so they would have good crops; it illustrated the prediction in Zechariah 14 and Ezekiel 47 of living water flowing from the Temple.

This was the moment Jesus chose to stand up and shout that He was the Living Water. Jesus is saying here that the one who believes in Him will be filled with the Holy Spirit, which would begin taking place before too much longer, starting at Pentecost. John gives the meaning of what Jesus said in parenthesis. Though the Holy Spirit existed, as we can see Him working in various places in the Old Testament, the era of the Church had not yet arrived, a time in which all believers would be indwelt by the Spirit. This wouldn't happen until after Jesus' resurrection.

John is making a theological statement here, as well. John says "those who believed in Him were going to receive". All that is necessary to receive the Holy Spirit is that you believe on Christ, and now in the Church age this happens at the moment of your decision to trust Christ for your salvation, not at some point later on. We'll get more into that in the book of Acts.

John 7:40-43 When they heard these words, some of the crowd began to say, "This really is the Prophet!" (41) Others said, "This is the Christ!" But still others said, "No, for the Christ doesn't come from Galilee, does he? (42) Don't the scriptures say that the Christ is a descendant of David and comes from Bethlehem, the village where David lived?" (43) So there was a division in the crowd because of Jesus.

What Jesus said really got their attention. Jesus really divided people here, and He still does that today. Jesus is divisive, Christianity is divisive, and that's why so many don't like it. They would rather have a religion that is inclusive, where you can believe pretty much anything you want.

So the crowd began to argue about who Jesus was. Some thought He was the Prophet spoken of by Moses in Deuteronomy 18:15, some thought He was the Messiah. Some argued that such a lofty person as the Messiah couldn't possibly come from such a low place as Galilee! That's the same kind of stupid superiority complex people have that live in large cities like New York towards people who live in the Midwest, for example. But somebody in the crowd actually knew their scriptures (Psalm 89:4, Micah 5:2), and realized that Jesus fulfilled them!

John 7:44-49 Some of them were wanting to seize him, but no one laid a hand on him. (45) Then the officers returned to the chief priests and Pharisees, who said to them, "Why didn't you bring him back with you?" (46) The officers replied, "No one ever spoke like this man!" (47) Then the Pharisees answered, "You haven't been deceived too, have you? (48) None of the rulers or the Pharisees have believed in him, have they? (49) But this rabble who do not know the law are accursed!"

The temple police refused to arrest Him, because they realized this man was special. They probably realized that if they arrested Him, it would start a riot and that would bring the Roman armies down on them. Notice the disdain the priest and Pharisees have towards the common people who believed in Jesus. How would they know whether He is the Messiah or not, they don't know the scriptures! It's up to us, the experts, to determine whether He is authentic or not, and then we will tell them what to believe.

John 7:50-53 Nicodemus, who had gone to Jesus before and who was one of the rulers, said, (51) "Our law doesn't condemn a man unless it first hears from him and learns what he is doing, does it?" (52) They replied, "You aren't from Galilee too, are you? Investigate carefully and you will see that no prophet comes from Galilee!" (53) [[And each one departed to his own house.

Nicodemus speaks up for Jesus here, and is promptly insulted by the rest of the leaders. Nicodemus was right, Deuteronomy 1:16 said that an accused person was to get a hearing before he was judged. So they were ignoring their own law.

To be called a Galilean was like being called stupid, a country bumpkin. And the fact that Nicodemus took a stand for Jesus here gives us a clue that he did become a believer in Jesus after he had the conversation with Him about being born again. He chose to stay in the Sanhedrin, as a secret believer, hoping that maybe he could make a difference. This is a dangerous thing for him to do, to speak for Jesus.

The interesting thing is that there were prophets that came from Galilee, and they knew that. Actually, the prophets Jonah, Hosea, Nahum, and perhaps Elijah, Elisha, and Amos were from Galilee or close to it. They were trying to come up with proof that Jesus couldn't be a true prophet or the Messiah, so they were even ignoring the facts. But facts never seem to stand in the way of anyone that refuses to accept the truth.

Verse 53 in this chapter through verse 11 in chapter 8 are not included in some early manuscripts, leading some to believe they weren't part of the original writing of John. But there is good evidence for its inclusion - it was accepted by the early church fathers, for one thing. Augustine said it was removed by men who were afraid their wives would use it as an excuse for immorality! But there is no good reason not to include it.

Chapter 8 – Christ the Light of the World

John 8:1-2 But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. (2) Early in the morning he came to the temple courts again. All the people came to him, and he sat down and began to teach them.

The Mount of Olives overlooks the eastern side of the Temple Mount. Jesus must have slept there that night among the olive trees.

John 8:3-5 The experts in the law and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught committing adultery. They made her stand in front of them (4) and said to Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act of adultery. (5) In the law Moses commanded us to stone to death such women. What then do you say?"

The law that these “experts” are alluding to is found in Leviticus 20:10 and Deuteronomy 22:20-24. They conveniently left out the part that BOTH the man and the woman are to be put to death. Where was the man? And stoning was only required when the woman was betrothed. For married women, the method used was generally strangulation, but the Law wasn’t specific about the method. They were trying to catch Jesus at breaking the Law of Moses so they could have a case to kill Him, but they aren’t following the Law themselves.

These were the scribes, and it’s the only place in John that they are mentioned. They were the ones who made copies of the Law, and they had become its teachers. But if they had really been concerned about upholding the Law, they would have taken the woman along with the man to their court to be tried.

How did they know someone was in the act of committing adultery? Smells like a setup to me. During the time of the festival, when people lived in the little booths everywhere, there was kind of a vacation/party atmosphere going on, and there tended to be more immorality happening, which was usually overlooked by the religious leaders.

John 8:6-8 (Now they were asking this in an attempt to trap him, so that they could bring charges against him.) Jesus bent down and wrote on the ground with his finger. (7) When they persisted in asking him, he stood up straight and replied, "**Whoever among you is guiltless may be the first to throw a stone at her.**" (8) Then he bent over again and wrote on the ground.

These religious leaders thought they had Jesus trapped. They thought He would agree with the Law and approve of her stoning, in which case they could accuse Him of not having the love and mercy He taught about, or He would reject the Law and they would be able to accuse Him of disobeying God’s Word.

But Jesus chose a third way, He just ignored them! You can’t put Jesus in a box! Then when they persisted, He turned it back on them. It was brilliant.

What did Jesus write on the ground? We don’t know, John doesn’t say. One tradition is that He was writing in the dirt the sins of each one of the men there accusing the woman, and some scribes even added this to the end of verse six or eight. Another says that He wrote the name of the man that was involved, showing the Pharisees He knew what they were trying to do. Others speculate He was just doodling.

John 8:9 Now when they heard this, they began to drift away one at a time, starting with the older ones, until Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him.

It’s interesting that the older ones left first, it could be because they were more ready to admit that they had committed sins. The fact that these men all left shows that they accepted their own guilt for the sins they had committed.

John 8:10-11 Jesus stood up straight and said to her, "**Woman, where are they? Did no one condemn you?**" (11) She replied, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said, "**I do not condemn you either. Go, and from now on do not sin any more.**""]

Here you see Jesus addressing this woman the way He did His mother Mary at the wedding.

Woman” was a polite way of addressing a woman, like saying “Ma’am” or “Madam” today. Jesus is showing great mercy to this woman, even though the Law said she should be stoned. He didn’t say she was innocent, but He also didn’t lecture her about her sins. He forgave her and told her not to sin again, not to continue in this kind of sin. God knows we’re going to sin, and He’s always ready to forgive us. But He wants a repentant heart, and He doesn’t want us to make a continual habit out of it.

“Yeshua’s response showed four things: he was not against the Torah, he was merciful toward the woman, he opposed her sin (Exodus 20:13-14), and he could silence hecklers and put them to shame.” David H. Stern

The big lesson we learn from this is that no one is perfect except for Jesus, and so we do not have the right to condemn others for their sin.

The closing parenthesis at the end of verse 11 indicates the end of the section, which started in 7:53, that does not exist in the earliest manuscripts.

John 8:12 Then Jesus spoke out again, **"I am the light of the world. The one who follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."**

If the previous verses were not part of the original narrative, then Jesus is continuing His discourse with the people in the temple courts from the last chapter. If the verses are original, then Jesus must have followed these men who left after Jesus shamed them in front of the adulteress, and continued to speak to them.

If this was during the Feast of Tabernacles, they would put four huge candelabras in the temple courtyard, about 8 feet tall and 3 feet wide, and light them. This commemorated the pillar of fire that led the Israelites in the wilderness. Men would dance in the light of these candelabras and sing praises to God. Historians say the light could be seen throughout the city of Jerusalem. This may be why Jesus at that time referred to Himself as the light of the world.

The coming of Jesus into the world forces everyone to choose sides, whether they realize it or not. The person who follows Jesus walks in the light, the one who does not follow Jesus is walking in darkness.

John 8:13-14 So the Pharisees objected, **"You testify about yourself; your testimony is not true!"** (14) Jesus answered, **"Even if I testify about myself, my testimony is true, because I know where I came from and where I am going. But you people do not know where I came from or where I am going."**

Of course, others had testified about Him, including John the Baptist and the Father, but Jesus chose not to argue with them. He explained that He has the right to testify about Himself, because He knows He came from heaven. And they can’t deny it because they don’t know where He came from.

John 8:15-16 You people judge by outward appearances; I do not judge anyone. (16) **But if I judge, my evaluation is accurate, because I am not alone when I judge, but I and the Father who sent me do so together.**

Jesus didn’t come to condemn the world, but to save it (John 3:17), so He is not there to judge. But He has the right to, because He is able to judge perfectly, being divine, and is backed by the

Father.

John 8:17-18 It is written in your law that the testimony of two men is true. (18) I testify about myself and the Father who sent me testifies about me."

The law Jesus is referring to is Deuteronomy 17:6. Jesus is saying, it's not just me, there are two of us!

John 8:19-20 Then they began asking him, "Who is your father?" Jesus answered, "You do not know either me or my Father. If you knew me you would know my Father too." (20) (Jesus spoke these words near the offering box while he was teaching in the temple courts. No one seized him because his time had not yet come.)

You think Jesus is fed up with these guys? The Pharisees are just tuning out the fact that He is speaking about Father God, and that is what the Messiah was supposed to do! They knew that the Messiah was going to be deity, it should not have surprised them at all.

John 8:21 Then Jesus said to them again, "I am going away, and you will look for me but will die in your sin. Where I am going you cannot come."

Jesus is telling them what their end would be, that they would die in their sins. And this had to be especially insulting to these religious leaders, who thought that they obeyed the Law and were perfect.

John 8:22 So the Jewish leaders began to say, "Perhaps he is going to kill himself, because he says, 'Where I am going you cannot come.' "

The reason they said this is because the Jews believed that if you took your own life you would go straight to hell. Since Pharisees never ever thought it possible that they would go to hell, this is the only place they could conceive that Jesus could go where they could not follow.

John 8:23-24 Jesus replied, "You people are from below; I am from above. You people are from this world; I am not from this world. (24) Thus I told you that you will die in your sins. For unless you believe that I am he, you will die in your sins."

Instead of correcting them, Jesus just told them why they didn't get it. The word "he" in verse 24 is not in the original Greek, so once again Jesus is claiming to be God using the divine name "I AM", and making it clear that what you believe about who Jesus is makes all the difference in whether a person will be forgiven of their sins and have eternal life or not. Read it again, "Unless you believe that I AM, you will die in your sins." It doesn't get any plainer than that.

John 8:25-27 So they said to him, "Who are you?" Jesus replied, "What I have told you from the beginning. (26) I have many things to say and to judge about you, but the Father who sent me is truthful, and the things I have heard from him I speak to the world." (27) (They did not understand that he was telling them about his Father.)

Even after all the things Jesus had been saying about Himself, they still didn't get that He was the Messiah. And I think Jesus was saying that there are many other things I could say to you, but what would be the point? It would just condemn them even more. Do you know people that you have

tried to witness to, tried to tell them about the gospel and they just don't get it or they refuse to listen? You just feel like there is no point in continuing to try, they'll never get it.

John 8:28-30 Then Jesus said, "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, and I do nothing on my own initiative, but I speak just what the Father taught me. (29) And the one who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone, because I always do those things that please him." (30) While he was saying these things, many people believed in him.

"When you lift up the Son of Man" - this can only be speaking about His death on the cross. This would tell us that at least some of the people that were there listening to Him would believe in Him when He was crucified. And again He is saying "you will know that I AM", the "he" is not in the Greek. Thankfully, many people believed in Him right then and there! Jesus words were having a powerful effect on those who had open hearts!

John 8:31-32 Then Jesus said to those Judeans who had believed him, "If you continue to follow my teaching, you are really my disciples (32) and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

Speaking to the ones who believed Him, He was encouraging them continue to follow Him, that would prove that they really believed in Him. "The truth will set you free", is so misused, you even hear it used by non-believers. It is not some Gnostic truth about the cosmos, the soul, its relation to the body, or something like that. It is used most often in a philosophical sense, but that's not the context of what Jesus has been speaking about.

It must refer to the fact that people are slaves to sin until Jesus sets them free, and this is verified in the next verses. It is saving truth. By the way, have you ever known anyone who was saved from a life of gross sin? They are the ones who know the truth of Jesus' words. They know they have been set free from bondage to sin.

John 8:33-36 "We are descendants of Abraham," they replied, "and have never been anyone's slaves! How can you say, 'You will become free?'" (34) Jesus answered them, "I tell you the solemn truth, everyone who practices sin is a slave of sin. (35) The slave does not remain in the family forever, but the son remains forever. (36) So if the son sets you free, you will be really free."

Well, they're still thinking physically, not spiritually. And Jesus confirms that sin makes us slaves. Sin is personified as a cruel master. Paul used the same illustration (Romans 6:15-23).

While sin can be fun, it eventually controls us. We have all had times in our lives that we wanted to do what was right, but instead we did what was wrong. But through Jesus Christ we can have the victory over sin; He sets us free from being enslaved by it.

One of the hard lessons we learn in life is that real freedom is not being able to do what we want when we want. When you're a kid living at home, you long for the day you can be free to make your own decisions and do what you want. But when you get away from home you find out that doesn't exist even when you're an adult.

Jesus points out that slaves have no freedom, but He makes us truly free. Who else could set us

free but the Son of God? Real freedom is getting out of the darkness of sin into the light of a relationship with Jesus.

John 8:37-38 I know that you are Abraham's descendants. But you want to kill me, because my teaching makes no progress among you. (38) I am telling you the things I have seen while with the Father; as for you, practice the things you have heard from the Father!"

He's telling them that they don't want to hear what He is telling them, they'll never get it. There is a significant difference in translations on verse 38, there are differences in the pronouns between manuscripts. Many say it like the following in the NASB:

John 8:38 "I speak the things which I have seen with My Father; therefore you also do the things which you heard from your father."

This would seem to say that Jesus is saying that their father is Satan, which He confirms in verse 41. The other reading would be an exhortation to start really doing what God say in the scriptures.

John 8:39-40 They answered him, "Abraham is our father!" Jesus replied, "If you are Abraham's children, you would be doing the deeds of Abraham. (40) But now you are trying to kill me, a man who has told you the truth I heard from God. Abraham did not do this!"

The Jews relied not only on their own efforts to keep the Law but also on what Abraham had done to guarantee their salvation. Jewish theology held that, because Abraham had obeyed God's call, he had accrued enough credit to cover all of his descendants throughout history. Jesus was pointing out that it wasn't their physical descent from Abraham that would save them, but that they would have the faith of Abraham, and believe what God said like Abraham did.

If they had truly been Abraham's children, they would have believed that Jesus was the Messiah. Abraham would not have responded to the truth that Jesus was telling them in this way, this is how Satan would react. John the Baptist had earlier warned the Jews against the danger of trusting in their Abrahamic lineage (Luke 3:8). Now Jesus is going to ram it home.

John 8:41-43 You people are doing the deeds of your father." Then they said to Jesus, "We were not born as a result of immorality! We have only one Father, God himself." (42) Jesus replied, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I have come from God and am now here. I have not come on my own initiative, but he sent me. (43) Why don't you understand what I am saying? It is because you cannot accept my teaching.

Jesus sees the real problem here - they hear what He is saying, but they just don't accept it. This is the way so many people are. They have heard the truth, but they don't want to accept it. And Jesus says this means you're of the line of Satan, not of Abraham. This is no meek and mild Jesus here! The father of all unbelievers is the devil (v. 44; see also Ephesians 2:2-3; 1 John 3:8-10).

John 8:44 You people are from your father the devil, and you want to do what your father desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not uphold the truth, because there is no truth in him. Whenever he lies, he speaks according to his own nature, because he is a liar and the father of lies.

This was a real slap in the face to the religious authorities, and I'm sure it left them steaming. If you don't accept Christ, you're following Satan. And this applies to all people, not just Jews. I'm sure some anti-Semitic people have used this verse to try to say that Jewish people are of the devil. But He was speaking of the ones there who refused to accept the truth of what He was saying.

John 8:45-47 But because I am telling you the truth, you do not believe me. (46) Who among you can prove me guilty of any sin? If I am telling you the truth, why don't you believe me? (47) The one who belongs to God listens and responds to God's words. You don't listen and respond, because you don't belong to God."

Jesus keeps pouring it on. He tells the men who thought they were God's representatives, who thought they had the scriptures figured out, who thought they would rank high in the Kingdom of God, that they didn't even belong to God.

John 8:48 The Judeans replied, "Aren't we correct in saying that you are a Samaritan and are possessed by a demon?"

Like children, not having an answer, they resort to name-calling. They insult Jesus by calling Him a Samaritan and accusing Him of being possessed, the two worst things they could think of. They may have heard of His work among the Samaritans.

John 8:49-51 Jesus answered, "I am not possessed by a demon, but I honor my Father — and yet you dishonor me. (50) I am not trying to get praise for myself. There is one who demands it, and he also judges. (51) I tell you the solemn truth, if anyone obeys my teaching, he will never see death."

When He was accused, Jesus did not try to justify Himself (verse 54). He lets His heavenly Father vindicate Him. If people accuse us falsely, we should do the same - the Father will ultimately vindicate us.

In verse 51 Jesus is obviously speaking of spiritual death. A person who obeys Jesus will not be eternally separated from God.

John 8:52-53 Then the Judeans responded, "Now we know you're possessed by a demon! Both Abraham and the prophets died, and yet you say, 'If anyone obeys my teaching, he will never experience death.' (53) You aren't greater than our father Abraham who died, are you? And the prophets died too! Who do you claim to be?"

These people are still not thinking spiritually - Jesus was speaking about spiritual death. The irony of verse 53 is that of course He is greater than Abraham. But He had not come to proclaim His own greatness.

John 8:54-56 Jesus replied, "If I glorify myself, my glory is worthless. The one who glorifies me is my Father, about whom you people say, 'He is our God.' (55) Yet you do not know him, but I know him. If I were to say that I do not know him, I would be a liar like you. But I do know him, and I obey his teaching. (56) Your father Abraham was overjoyed to see my day, and he saw it and was glad."

Christ testifies about Himself, but He leaves the glorifying to the Father. He does not glorify

Himself. Of course all of this is going over these Pharisee's heads.

What is Jesus saying in verse 56? Well, there are several possibilities:

1. Abraham knew the Messiah would come from him and so he rejoiced and saw Him by faith (Genesis 12:3).
2. Some rabbis held that Abraham's vision in Genesis 15:8-21 included a view of the history of Israel and the Messiah.
3. The appearance of Jehovah to Abraham in Genesis 18 may have been Christ, and Abraham may have recognized Him as the Messiah or was told by Christ about His future coming.

John 8:57-58 Then the Judeans replied, "You are not yet fifty years old! Have you seen Abraham?" (58) Jesus said to them, "I tell you the solemn truth, before Abraham came into existence, I am!"

Jesus then blew them away by claiming to be superior to Abraham. Abraham came into being; but when he was born, Jesus was already existing. By saying "I Am", He was claiming to be God (Exodus 3:14; Isaiah 41:4; 43:11-13; John 8:28); and the Jews' response (verse 59) showed they understood it that way. Jesus, because of His equality with God (5:18, 20:28, Philemon 2:6, Colossians 2:9), existed from all eternity (John 1:1). You can't escape His claim - Jesus is God, the Yahweh of the O.T.

John 8:59 Then they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out from the temple area.

For the first time the crowd understood what Jesus was saying. They understood He was claiming to be God with His I AM statement, and they tried to stone Him for blasphemy. This verse says that Jesus "hid Himself," but does not explain how this was done. Angels were always with Him (Mark 1:13; Luke 22:43), so they may have been involved.