

# JOHN

## Chapter 8

### *The Woman Caught in Adultery*

**1** but Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. **2** Early in the morning he came again to the temple. All the people came to him, and he sat down and taught them. **3** The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery, and placing her in the midst **4** they said to him, “Teacher, this woman has been caught in the act of adultery. **5** Now in the Law, Moses commanded us to stone such women. So what do you say?” **6** This they said to test him, that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. **7** And as they continued to ask him, he stood up and said to them, **“Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her.”** **8** And once more he bent down and wrote on the ground. **9** But when they heard it, they went away one by one, beginning with the older ones, and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. **10** Jesus stood up and said to her, **“Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?”** **11** She said, “No one, Lord.” And Jesus said, **“Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more.”**]]

**8:1** *Mount of Olives.* East of the temple across the Kidron Valley. (TLSB)

**8:3** *a woman caught...in adultery.* This sin cannot be committed alone, so the question arises as to why only one offender was brought. The incident was staged to trap Jesus (v. 6), and provision had been made for the man to escape. The woman’s accusers must have been especially eager to humiliate her, since they could have kept her in private custody while they spoke to Jesus. (CSB)

A married woman caught in the act of sexual intercourse with a man who was not her husband. The man should also have been brought for judgment (Lv. 20:10; Dt. 22:22). (TLSB)

*placing in the midst* - They have made her stand in front of Jesus and the crowd, an unnecessary act of humiliation. They had set a trap for this woman (v. 5) and sought to discredit Jesus by forcing this situation upon Him. (TLSB)

**8:4** *caught in the act.* Compromising circumstances were not sufficient evidence, as Jewish law required witnesses who had seen the act. (CSB)

**8:5** *to stone such women.* They altered the law a little. The manner of execution was not prescribed unless the woman was a betrothed virgin (Dt 22:23–24). And the law required the execution of both parties (Lev 20:10; Dt 22:22), not just the woman. (CSB)

Preferred method was to push the convicted person off a height of at least 6 feet and then drop or throw stones on the victim until she died. Both the adulterous woman and her lover were to be stoned, but they singled her out, likely letting the man escape. (TLSB)

**8:6** *to test him.* The Romans did not allow the Jews to carry out death sentences (18:31), so if Jesus had said to stone her, he could have been in conflict with the Romans. If he had said not to stone her, he could have been accused of being unsupportive of the law. (CSB)

Scribes and Pharisees sought to catch Jesus in something that could be used to condemn Him, either in the popular mind, in court, or in both. (TLSB)

*wrote with his finger.* We can only guess what Jesus wrote on the ground. (CSB)

Not absolutely clear what Jesus wrote. Sometimes judges wrote down their sentence before pronouncing it - in which case Jesus wrote what He spoke in v. 7. (TLSB)

**8:7** *be the first.* Jesus' answer disarmed them. Since he spoke of throwing a stone, he could not be accused of failure to uphold the law. But the qualification for throwing it prevented anyone from acting. (CSB)

*without sin.* The phrase is quite general and means "without any sin," not "without this sin." (CSB)

Jesus pricks the consciences of the woman's accusers, who likely entrapped her in order to entrap Jesus. (TLSB)

**8:9** *went away.* Because they were not "without sin" (v. 7). (CSB)

*the older ones.* They were the first to realize what was involved. But all the men were either conscience-stricken or afraid, and in the end only Jesus and the woman remained. (CSB)

Elders would have had a greater share of responsibility and provided leadership for the rest. (TLSB)

**8:10** *Woman.* Not a harsh form of address (cf. its use in 19:26). (CSB)

**8:11** *Go... from no on sin no more.* Jesus did not condone what the woman had done. (CSB)

Jesus pronounced no specific word of forgiveness (cf. Lk. 7:48-50). The woman, though possibly entrapped, was nevertheless guilty. He called her to repent and to change her sinful life. (TLSB)

**7:53–8:11** The scribes and Pharisees fail to trap Jesus by requesting a hasty judgment against a woman caught in the act of adultery. Jesus reveals the hypocrisy of His detractors and calls them to self-examination, even as He calls the sinful woman to consider her error. The Lord's greatest desire is to deliver us from sin through repentance and faith, rather than condemn us for our sins. Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, even the worst of us, by His sacrifice on the cross. • O Lord, be merciful to me, a poor sinful being. Amen. (TLSB)

*I am the light of the World*

**12** Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, **"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."** **13** So the Pharisees said to him, **"You are bearing witness about yourself; your testimony is not true."** **14** Jesus answered, **"Even if I do bear witness about myself, my testimony is true, for I know where I came from and where I am going, but you do not know where I come from or where I am going."** **15** You judge according to the flesh; I judge no one. **16** Yet even if I do judge, my judgment is true, for it is not I alone who judge, but I and the Father[a] who sent me. **17** In your Law it is written that the testimony of two people is true. **18** I am the one who bears witness about myself, and the Father who sent me bears witness about me." **19** They said to

him therefore, “Where is your Father?” Jesus answered, “You know neither me nor my Father. If you knew me, you would know my Father also.” 20 These words he spoke in the treasury, as he taught in the temple; but no one arrested him, because his hour had not yet come. 21 So he said to them again, “I am going away, and you will seek me, and you will die in your sin. Where I am going, you cannot come.” 22 So the Jews said, “Will he kill himself, since he says, ‘Where I am going, you cannot come?’” 23 He said to them, “You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. 24 I told you that you would die in your sins, for unless you believe that I am he you will die in your sins.” 25 So they said to him, “Who are you?” Jesus said to them, “Just what I have been telling you from the beginning. 26 I have much to say about you and much to judge, but he who sent me is true, and I declare to the world what I have heard from him.” 27 They did not understand that he had been speaking to them about the Father. 28 So Jesus said to them, “When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me. 29 And he who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to him.” 30 As he was saying these things, many believed in him.

**8:12** *the light.* It is also true that “God is light” (1Jn 1:5). And as Jesus’ followers reflect the light that comes from him, they too are “the light of the world” (Mt 5:14; cf. Php 2:15). (CSB)

*darkness.* Both the darkness of this world and that of Satan. (CSB)

*the light of life.* “God is light” (1Jn 1:5); but Jesus is also the light from God that lights the way for life—as the pillar of fire lighted the way for the Israelites (see Ex 13:21; Ne 9:12). (CSB)

**8:13** *Pharisees.* Pharisees argued that Jesus’ self-testimony was invalid on Jewish legal grounds. (TLSB)

**8:14** Jesus made two points in reply. First, he was qualified to bear testimony, whereas the Pharisees were not; and he knew both his origin and his destination, whereas they knew neither. (See note on vv. 16–18 for the second point.) (CSB)

Jesus’ witness about Himself is true because of His identity (origin) and mission (destination). His adversaries are in no position to judge His witness because they know neither His nature nor His credentials. (TLSB)

**8:15** The judgment of the Pharisees was limited and worldly. In the sense they meant, Jesus made it clear that he did not judge at all. In the proper sense, of course, he did judge (v. 26). (CSB)

**8:16–18** Jesus’ second point was that his testimony was not unsupported. The Father was with him, so he and the Father were the two witnesses required by the law (Dt 17:6; 19:15). (CSB)

**8:16** *the Father who sent me.* Jesus was always aware of his mission. (CSB)

Jesus did not come to judge the world but to save it (3:17). Yet, if He does judge, His judgment is just and true. (TLSB)

**8:17–18** Jesus’ testimony was valid even, according to the Law on which the Pharisees took their stand (cf. Dt. 19:15); the Father is the great second witness. (TLSB)

**8:19** *If you knew me.* John makes it clear that the Word (Jesus) was with God and was God (1:1) and reveals God (1:18). Jesus here stresses that the Father is known through the Son and that to know the one is to know the other. (CSB)

**8:20** *in the treasury* - Near the 13 collection boxes for donation to the poor, located in the court of women (cf. Mk. 12:41-42). (TLSB)

**8:21** *sin* – Singular here (cf. v. 24), meaning unbelief or rejection of Jesus leading to eternal condemnation (3:18; 9:41; 16:9). (TLSB)

**8:23** Things other than death divide people (cf., e.g., v. 47; 3:31; 15:19; 1Jn 3:10 etc.). (CSB)

*in* – Here denotes origin. Jesus was certainly in the world, but he was not of the world. They belonged to “this world”—Satan’s domain (1Jn 5:19). (CSB)

Jesus sharply contrasts the realm of God and the realm of fallen humanity corrupted by sin. (TLSB)

**8:24** *I am.* Jesus echoes God’s great affirmation about himself (see v. 58; see also notes on 6:35; Ex 3:14). (CSB)

**8:27** These leaders lacked spiritual discernment. (TLSB)

**8:28** *lifted up.* Normally used in the NT in the sense of “exalt,” but John uses it of the crucifixion (see 3:14). (CSB)

Term used four times in John to indicate Christ’s exaltation on the cross and His heavenly exaltation. (TLSB)

**8:29** *has not left me.* Not only did the Father send the Son (vv 16, 18, 26), but He also accompanied and supported the Son in His work. (TLSB)

**8:30** *many believed* – The Word convinced many, though the faith of some may have been weak and transitory. (TLSB)

**8:12–30** Jesus claims to be the light of the world, through whom people may have life, which prompts the Pharisees to question His authority. Unless individuals believe in Jesus Christ, who was sent by God the Father, they will die in their sins. Jesus’ cross reveals that He is truly the Messiah, the Son of Man sent to deliver us from spiritual darkness. • Heavenly Father, You have made me a new person through Baptism. Now make me Your light in the world. Amen. (TLSB)

*The Truth will set You Free*

**31** So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, **“If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, 32 and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” 33** They answered him, **“We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say, ‘You will become free?’” 34** Jesus answered them, **“Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin. 35 The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever. 36 So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. 37 I know that you are offspring of Abraham; yet you seek to kill me because my**

**word finds no place in you. 38 I speak of what I have seen with my Father, and you do what you have heard from your father.”**

When editors of the text and commentators make a paragraph at verse 30 or 31, this does not imply that we are to insert an interval, either of hours or of a day, between the paragraphs, as is generally done. John connects verse 30 with what precedes by means of tauto and genitive absolute, “while he was saying these things,” and verse 31 with verse 30 by means of *oun*, “accordingly, Jesus was saying” to these believers. Any interval is shut out. John’s remark in verse 30 and in the preamble of verse 31 are merely explanatory of the words which Jesus now utters, for they are words intended only for believers, and we must be told that and how such believers were present. John’s explanatory remark is exactly like the one he inserted a moment ago in verse 27 in order to make plain to us why Jesus turned to prophecy in verse 28. (Lanski)

From verse 21 to the end of the chapter is one uninterrupted narration. The persons participating are the same throughout, Jesus and a crowd of Jews. At first all are hostile to Jesus, but by the time we reach verse 29, a goodly number are actually won to believe in Him not through miracles, but through the words of warning coupled with grace which these men had just heard. In the same way or other, not indicated by John, these believers manifest their change of heart. At once Jesus has a word for them in particular. No sooner does He utter it than the hostile crowd of Jews raises further objection. They act just as they did from the start: they pick at some point to which to object (compare verse 22 and verse 25; also verse 13 and 19). John does not need to say in verse 33 who these objectors are, for we have heard the from very start, and their objection is of the same type as before. Jesus answers then in verse 34, etc. But they go on. The clash becomes more and more intense until these Jews take up stone and Jesus leaves them. (Lanski)

**8:31-36** Verse 30 concludes: “Even as he spoke, many put their faith in him.” He had been speaking of his faithful imparting of the Word of the Father in word and deed. Against this background the Lord goes on to address these (and all) adherents to the faith, warning against any “faith” unwilling to be formed and reformed by the faith revealed in Christ. Jesus’ summons to the truth stands in stark contrast to the lie and the father of lies, which have enslaved Christ’s believing opponents (cf v 44). As with other such bold contrasts (e.g., light/darkness, 1:5; life/death, 5:24; blind/seeing, 9:41), John’s Gospel delineates the unmistakable difference between the truth and the lie, and between the disciple who remains in Jesus’ word and the “disciple” who will not. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 12, Part 4)

Jesus is speaking within the context of the Feast of Tabernacles (Jn 7:2–8:59), which commemorated Israel’s sojourn in the wilderness after having been freed from the slavery of Egypt. During this sojourn, God gave to Israel the way of the Law. This section continues the theme of John’s Gospel that Jesus is himself the true Torah of God, the Word of God who is the way of discipleship that leads to the Father. Jesus has just indicated that he does nothing “on [his] own” but does only that which the Father teaches him, and so he pleases the Father “always” (Jn 8:28–29). The Jews understand their identity as grounded in Abraham and in their loyalty to Moses (cf. Jn 9:28). True discipleship, however, is found in Jesus, who is the way to the Father. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

This chapter is something of a heavyweight in John’s Gospel. First, Jesus is challenged to render judgment in the case of the adulterous woman; the accusers obviously expected Jesus to fail and be embarrassed regarding that situation. Then Jesus’ “light of the world” message beats the Pharisees with their own words regarding proper application of the Law. Thereafter the Savior uncovers sin and works faith in the hearts of some of the listeners. The verses following our text explicate the question not of religious liberty but of spiritual freedom. This is followed by Jesus’

charge that some of his hearers are beholden to Satan—no sweet little Jesus here! And finally, we hear one of the great dogmatic statements of the New Testament: “If anyone keeps my word, he will never see death. . . . Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am” (8:51, 58). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 4)

**8:31-32** John’s language is suggestive. *ean humeis meinēte en tōi logōi tōi emōi*, “If you abide in my word” (ESV). But Jesus is himself “the Word” (*ho logos*, Jn 1:14). “You are truly [*alēthōs*] my disciples” (ESV). In the next verse, Jesus says that “the truth [*hē alētheia*] will set you free.” But Jesus is himself “the truth” (Jn 14:6). *alēthōs* has the meaning of “authentically,” “truly,” “not only in appearance.” To be truly the disciple of Jesus is to be to Jesus as Jesus, who is the truth, is to the Father (8:28–29). As the truth, Jesus is the perfect expression of the Father’s will. Those who are truly the disciples of Jesus are those who follow the way, which is Jesus himself. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

John 8:31–36 is simple and straightforward, part of an extended conversation Jesus has with the Jewish people and leaders beginning with his announcement, “I am the light of the world” (8:12). Back and forth they go until v 30, “As he was saying these things, many believed in him.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 18, Part 4)

**8:31** *believed*.† Here seems to be imperfect and transitory. Their words show that these people were not true believers (see vv. 33, 37). (CSB)

Within the context of John’s *Gospel*, it could well be that Jesus’ dialog is with Jewish disciples who had, at one time, believed him but had fallen away and become hostile. In v 37, he acknowledges that he knows they seek to kill him. He labels them children of the devil (v 44) and a heated discussion follows. Hardly rabbi-disciple talk! (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 10, Part 4)

*tous pepisteukotas autōi*, “who had believed him.” The perfect tense here is puzzling. It would normally convey true and enduring faith, but that goes against the sense of what follows. Does v 30 refer to one group and v 31 to another? Or are they the same, and a different group is designated by the “they” of v 33? In fact, nothing in the text indicates such a change of subjects. It seems best to understand Jesus’ words as addressed to one and the same group (hence a strong warning against any self-confident “discipleship”). This requires understanding “believed” to mean that their “faith” was for now at best shallow, perhaps an acknowledgment that Jesus speaks the truth but an unwillingness to trust in that truth. The NIV does not convey it, but the text has a “therefore” that may be a significant bridge connecting v 31 to v 30, and a witness to this understanding: “Jesus *therefore* said to the Jews who had believed him.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 12, Part 4)

“*Jews who believed*.” What kind of faith did they have? The Jesus-is-an-interesting-fellow kind of faith? Well, saving faith is “abiding” faith. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 4)

Looking at verses 30, 33 and 37, it seems at least a portion of the group who Jesus was addressing did not really believe or were very tentative.

Jesus spoke to those who believed while, apparently the unbelieving Jews were listening too. The tender faith of those new believers needed strengthening. Others whose new faith wavered already had left Him (6:66). (PBC)

It is a disappointing price that Christ asks of those who were beginning to believe in Him and were saying: “We will remain loyal to You even at the risk of life and limb.” Christ looks askance at them and says: “Yes indeed, if your faith in Me were only genuine and sincere! But it seems to Me that you will not remain faithful to Me.” And now Christ begins to speak about the true and the false disciples of the divine Word: “Many hear the Gospel and remain with it for utilitarian reasons. They reap money, goods, and honor from it. My dear friends, who would not like that! (Luther)

Many of the Jews had indeed come to faith, but their minds were still held in the bondage of a carnal understanding. Their idea of discipleship was that of an external adherence to Christ, of professing allegiance to Him as their Leader. (Kretzmann)

*if you abide* – *meno* – Continue, stay, remain, endure or stand.

This encounter with those “Jews who had [once upon a time?] believed him” takes us beyond the Reformation reality of how we are justified into the realm of how we live out that relationship daily. God has declared us righteous. Now what? Live it out! Jesus says, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples” (v 31)—and you will know a liberating truth. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 10, Part 4)

*meinēte* indicates perseverance, steadfastness, and immovability in purpose. As Jesus remains in the Father, we are to remain in his Word. *gnōsesthe*, “you will know,” is not to know cognitively with the mind but experientially with the will and the heart. *To have faith* is a close synonym of *to know*. The language of *truth* occurs frequently in John’s Gospel; the language of *freedom* only in this context. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

After faith has been kindled in the hearts of a goodly number of the present audience of Jesus, the great need is that they continue in the blessed course upon which they have entered. The pronoun *humeis* (you) is emphatic, “If you on your part remain,” etc., i.e., “you” having come to faith. This singles them out from the rest of the Jews. We must not overlook the implication in the verb, “remain” in my word. Jesus acknowledges that these men are now in His word; in other words, they now embrace His word by faith. He uses the aorist subjunctive “continue,” actually and definitely remain, be fixed and established in His word. The opposite would be to drop the word they have taken up, definitely to leave it again, namely by a return to unbelief. It indicates that these Jews now believed in what Jesus had told them; to believe “him” = to believe what He says. Theirs was the genuine type of faith, resting on the word. All they needed was to become permanently fixed in that faith. (Lenski)

Then Jesus speaks directly to those “Jews who had believed in him, ‘If you abide in my word.’ ” *Abide* means “to remain in, to live in, to dwell in.” “In my word” is where the true disciple of Jesus needs to remain. How do you remain in the faith? You remain in Jesus’ Word. The Word of God is faith’s bread and butter, faith’s fuel, and the air faith breathes. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 18, Part 4)

To draw close to Jesus, the Word, they literally needed to remain in (here, “hold to”) His Word (here “teaching”). Jesus had power to still storms. He fed hungry crowds and healed illnesses.

That all had an impact and drew people to listen to Him. But how did He keep disciples? He held by His Word. (PBC)

Speaking to those whose belief in Him was superficial, Jesus explained that discipleship meant accepting all of His teaching and remaining faithful to it. (TLSB)

Abiding is a major theme in John, defining the relationship not only persons in the Trinity (1:32-33; 14:10; 15:10), but also between believers and Christ. (5:31; 15:7, 9-10). “I wish to follow with all my strength the lowly Jesus; I wish Him, who loved me and gave Himself for me, to embrace me with the arms of His love, which suffered in my stead; but I must also feed on the Paschal Lamb, for unless I eat His Flesh and drink His Blood I have not life in me. It is one thing to follow Jesus, another to hold Him, another to feed on Him. To follow Him is a live-giving purpose; to hold and embrace Him a solemn joy; to feed on Him a blissful life.” (Note on John 6:56 and quoting St Bernard of Clairvaux – (TLSB)

John 15:10 “I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.”

1 John 2:28 “And now, dear children, continue in him, so that when he appears we may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming.”

2 John 9 “Anyone who runs ahead and does not continue in the teaching of Christ does not have God; whoever continues in the teaching has both the Father and the Son.”

*my teaching* – logos - God’s Word, the Scriptures. Words that would have the substance of doctrine from God but not necessarily always direct quotes.

The continuing or remaining in the Word of Christ is the characteristic of the true disciples of Christ, the adhering strictly to the Word which He has left for our instruction in the gospels and epistles. There we find Jesus revealed, and through the understanding of Jesus as the Christ we have true knowledge, the knowledge of the truth; and that knowledge is the only factor which will give Us true liberty. Without Christ, all men are servants, slaves of sin, Rom. 6, 17-20. But in Christ there is deliverance from sin, true freedom. Only those men are truly free that have accepted the salvation of Jesus; only they have a will which is interested in good works and able to perform them. (Kretzmann)

We still have Jesus’ Word today. His Word leads us to Him and keeps us with Him. The mark of true followers of Jesus is that they remain true to His Word, where they learn the truth, and the makes them free. (PBC)

Jeremiah 9:24 “but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight,” declares the LORD.”

John 7:16-17 “Jesus answered, “My teaching is not my own. It comes from him who sent me. <sup>17</sup> If anyone chooses to do God’s will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own.”

John 17:3 “Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.”

*you are truly my disciples* – mathaytes It denotes the men who have attached themselves to Jesus as their Master. Unlike the people of Jesus’ day, they did not choose him but he chose them (John 15:16). Disciple always implies the existence of a personal attachment which shapes the whole life of the disciple. The basic meaning of the English noun “disciple” and is “learner.” Essentially a disciple is one who accepts, learns from, and follows a teacher and his instruction.

While these beginners in the faith must learn more and more of the precious word of Jesus and while further portions of the word such as the portion they already possess, will tend to hold them in the faith for the them to remain in the word of Jesus means primarily what Paul puts in the admonition in 1 Cor. 15:58, “Be ye steadfast, unmovable.” (see also Ephesians 4:13-14) (Lenski)

The Word is the vehicle of Jesus bringing Him to us and us to Him. To remain is not only a mark of discipleship but its very essence. (Lenski)

John 15:5, “I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.”

Acts 2:42, “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.”

Matthew 16:24, “Then Jesus said to his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.” (self-denial)

Luke 14:24-26, “Then Jesus said to his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. <sup>25</sup> For whoever wants to save his life <sup>a</sup> will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it. <sup>26</sup> What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Self denial, cross bearing – renunciation)

Luke 14:33, “In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple.” (Leaving it all)

John 15:8, “This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.” (Fruitfulness)

**8:32 know** – Of course, intellectual apprehension is included, but much more is involved (7:17), namely the knowledge derived from a living experience with the blessed power of the truth. “Shall know” does not refer to a remote future but to one that begins at once and continues and grows. (Lenski)

“You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” This verse is often quoted out of context and even given a worldly connotation. What is the truth that sets you free? The truth of

Jesus, the light of the world. The truth that Jesus has come from the Father to speak as the Father taught him (v 28). Jesus contrasts his truth with the lies of the devil, that “murderer from the beginning” (v 44). Ch 8 will finish with Jesus saying, “Before Abraham was, I am” (v 58). Those who refuse to believe consider this blasphemy (v 59), but for those who believe, this truth sets them free. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 18, Part 4)

*the truth.* Closely connected with Jesus (v. 36; 14:6), it is not philosophical truth but the truth that leads to salvation. (CSB)

The One who is the truth (14:6) necessarily speaks the truth. To know him and his saving work is to be freed from bondage to sin and to the lie. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 12, Part 4)

“What is truth?” So Pilate asked later on (18:38). Truth is not theological theory, but a person (see 1:17 and 14:6). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 4)

By “truth,” “reality,” is meant, and the Greek article here indicates the specific reality and actuality that exists in God and in Jesus, and all that they give to us and do for us by divine grace. Compare the term in 1:14. It is not in any sense philosophic, so that the language of philosophy should define it. It is not an abstraction formed by operations of the intellect but divine and everlasting fact, which remains such whether men know it, acknowledge it, realize it or not. It is a unit “the truth,” although it consists of many united and unified parts. Thus also Jesus speaks of His “Word” and of His “words.” It centers and circles about Jesus who, therefore, also calls Himself “the truth,” (14:6). In His own person and His life Jesus embodies, incorporates the saving realities of God. (Lenski)

Only in Jesus and His teaching will anyone be free from sin, death and Satan’s rule, and thus free to serve God with a pure heart. In contrast, Judaism taught that study of God’s Law made a person free. (TLSB)

John 1:14 “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

John 1:17 “For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.”

John 14:6 “Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. <sup>7</sup>If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.”

John 18:37 “Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. <sup>7</sup>If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.”

John 17:17, “Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.”

*free.* Freedom from sin, not from ignorance (see v. 36). (CSB)

Cf. 14:6. Only in Jesus and His teaching will anyone be free from sin, death, and Satan's rule, and thus free to serve God with a pure heart. In contrast, Judaism taught that study of God's Law made a person free. (TLSB)

For by realizing we are set free; hence the more we realize, the more we are set free. The one action grows immediately out of the other. Any measure of inner penetration on the part of the truth produces a corresponding measure of freedom. Moreover, these results have already begun in the believers Jesus addresses; for to believe the word of Jesus ever so little means to realize the truth to that extent and to be set free correspondingly. (Lenski)

This liberating effect implies that here "the truth" is viewed as an inward and spiritual power, one that conquers an opposing, an enslaving power. The implication is also that only "the truth," or the Word of Jesus, is able to crush that opposing power and to set men free. Hence, all who bar out from their souls this liberating power of necessity remain under the enslaving power. (Lenski)

A glorious prospect is held out to the believing Jews by Jesus, one to inspire them to ever greater faith in order to be free from all delusion and spiritual bondage. Liberty! (Lenski)

What do we learn for Jesus? We learn that He is God sent from God to save us from sin. We learn that we have forgiveness with Jesus. We learn that Jesus leads us to our heavenly Father. Those truths set us free – free from the curse of sin, free from death, free for eternal life. (PBC)

Romans 6:22 "But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life"

1 Peter 2:16 "Live as free men, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as servants of God."

He stirs their thoughts with this. They were subject to the Romans and greatly oppressed by them. They had no kingdom of their own. They yearned to be free and have their own king again. Now Christ tells them: "If you want to be free, to have your own king, to be rid of all tribute, and to shake off your yoke and bondage, you must believe in the Son. My kingdom is not of the world, nor is it that of the emperor. It is a kingdom of truth; it is the genuine kingdom, in which there is real life. Its life is different from this temporal life. In it truth will really make you free. But this does not exempt you from paying taxes, revenue, and tribute." Even today the peasants would like to see the time when they would not have to submit to or obey anyone, when there would be neither prince nor emperor, neither count nor lord, when the servants would be lords, and a maid would be the mistress, when a subject could be the ruler. This the Jews would have liked, and this prompts Christ to say here: "I am not speaking now of an earthly kingdom. I am not concerned now with earthly kings. If they are tyrants, let them remain tyrants, and let them answer for it. If they fleece and flay their poor people, what is that to Me? In the end they will suffer for it. But I want to lead you into a kingdom where you will be truly free, where you will be kings, princes, and lords. If you remain faithful to My Word and believe My message, then you can rest assured that you will become kings. All you must do is to believe the Word." (Luther)

**8:33** *they answered him* – John here writes "against him," affording us this hint that these objectors are the unbelieving Jews who again seize on one certain expression. Those who assume

that the believing Jew here speak against Jesus must assume that the believing Jews in one instant, they lose their faith in the next and in a moment become more vicious than ever. (Lenski)

*Abraham's descendants* – The name “Abraham” here broached runs on through the remainder of the conflict to the very end. It constitutes the acme of Jewish assurance and pride – does so to this day. The emphatic *su* (you) gets its force from the feeling of outrage that Jesus should presume to say anything against Abraham's seed. (Lenski)

Of course, the Jews insist that they are “offspring of Abraham [belonging to the covenant] and have never been enslaved to anyone.” How ironic, since they were at that moment subject to Roman occupation! But that's not the half of it. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 18, Part 4)

From a position of pride as descendants of Abraham, they are unable even to face the truth of their *political* servitude, much less that which Christ will now address, their bondage to sin and to the lie. The “you” is emphatic: “How can *you* say?” (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 12, Part 4)

The irony is that the salvation we so earnestly desire can become a scandal to us. Jesus promises these Jews a relationship with him (discipleship), the ability to “know the truth,” and ultimately freedom. But what they hear is condemnation. “What do you mean?” they snap at Jesus. “Are you implying we're not free? Check our pedigree. We're children of Abraham!” And then, to make matters worse, “We've never been slaves to anyone,” which, by the way, is a very selective reading and memory of the history of Israel. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 10, Part 4)

*have never been slaves.* An amazing disregard of their Roman overlords. (CSB)

That the promise of freedom in Jesus' Word would be heard by the Jews as condemnation can only be viewed as testimony to the power of their (and our) sinful self-deception. Sin blinds. It compels us to create a false world for ourselves in which we are self-justified, self-glorified, and self-righteous. For the Jews, their status as children of Israel provided an alleged freedom. What might it be for us, we wonder. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 10, Part 4)

The Jews' pride in descending from Abraham makes them blind. Really, never enslaved? Jewish history indicates otherwise: slavery in Egypt to begin, then in Babylon, and currently under Rome, to name just a few. And what about being captive to sin and guilt? (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 4)

This shuts out the notion that these Jews refer to political liberty, which also would contradict most flagrantly the facts of history, the domination of the Jews by the Babylonians, the Persians, the Seleucidae, and the Romans. Lenski)

They say, as it were: “Your words disgrace and humiliate us. You say that he who believes in You is to be free. As a matter of fact, we are not slaves; we are masters of the world. We have never been serfs and servants. We are Abraham's seed, and to him the words were addressed (Gen. 22:18): ‘By your descendants shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.’ ” This promise filled the Jews with conceit. “Abraham,” they say, “is called a lord over the whole world; and since we are his seed, we shall, ere long, rule in the entire world. And You say that we must first be made free by You. Do You regard us as bondsmen?” Thus you see how the Jews are given to carnal thoughts. Christ says: “You shall be kings and lords. You shall be free, not only beyond but also here. But you shall be beggar kings and beggar princes; for the world will have honor,

money, goods, and power. Yet you, too, shall reign—to be sure, not over the body, goods, and fields but over consciences, informing them that they must either obey the Word or die. Their hearts will either comply with your message or go to the devil.” The Jews here interpret these words carnally. (Luther)

Thought presently subject to Rome and the Herodians, these proud leaders asserted their independence by appealing to the heritage of Abraham, a free man. (TLSB)

That is the wonderful liberty of the Christian of which Luther wrote in such powerful words. But the Jews thought the Lord spoke of the liberty of the body from the tyranny of an earthly despot. They resented the inference as though they had ever been in bondage: Children of Abraham we are, and to no man have we ever been in bondage, in slavery. They forgot, for the moment, that they were subject to the Romans; they forgot also that their fathers had been in the power of the Egyptian, Babylonian, Syrian, and Roman conquerors. Since Abraham had received the promise of a descendant that should rule all nations, the Jews proudly called themselves children of kings. They resented even the idea as though they needed to be emancipated, to be set free. This answer of the Jews shows that they had quickly extinguished the small flame of faith which had been kindled in their hearts. Their Jewish pride would not accept such a statement from Jesus. The pride of the human heart has driven many a person away from the church to which he professed allegiance, because he resented the plain talk of the Bible regarding the depravity of the human heart. (Kretzmann)

Jewish texts could say that the Torah brings freedom from worldly cares or from the slavery in the coming world (Genesis Rabbah 92.1; Numbers Rabbah 10:8). The Mishnah (R. Akiba) says: “Even the poorest in Israel are looked upon as freemen who have lost their possessions, for they are the sons of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob” (Adolf von Schlatter, *Der Evangelist Johannes* [Stuttgart: Calwer, 1975], 212; used by permission). The Jews understand the identity of Israel in terms of their sonship to the patriarchs. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

**8:34-35** Even when a slave does not wear handcuffs, he is still captive when sin rules his life. As such, he is not fully part of the family. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 4)

**8:34** *truly, truly I say to you* – Jesus once again stressed the solemn truth of His message – amen, amen. (PBC)

*amēn amēn legō humin*, “I tell you the truth.” This marks what follows as a solemn truth, ignored at one’s own peril. *pas ho poiōn tēn hamartian*, “everyone who sins.” This points to a continuing state, “the one practicing sin.” This is significant: Jesus does not *argue* our bondage under sin; he simply *assumes* it. Our problem is not merely individual sins (plural), but sin (singular), the power, the slave owner that controls us. To this bondage our sins (plural) bear witness. Each of us is “sold as a slave to sin” (Rom 7:14). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 12, Part 4)

Amen, Amen – KJV – The double “amen” is the seal of truth for what Jesus says (compare on the term 1:51); “I say to you” is the voice of authority based on absolute knowledge and truth. (Lenski)

Jesus moves to the heart of the matter: “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin.” Has anyone ever stopped sinning? No? Then we are slaves of sin. By saying “Truly, truly,” Jesus sets this off as an inescapable fact no one can avoid. It’s not just them, but us as well. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 18, Part 4)

*a slave to sin.* Because the sinner cannot break free by his own strength. (CSB)

Jesus defines the reality of slavery and freedom in terms of spiritual status (condition). To be a slave is to have a lord who governs and directs. Those who sin have sin as their lord. Here it is not so much a question of sinful acts as it is of the condition of will and heart, which is sinful and therefore sins. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

The man so characterized, who dies what is sin, obeys the dictates of sin, cannot break away from them – he is beyond question a slave to sin the spiritual soul-slavery of the worst kind. This is true of men everywhere, at all times. The effect of sinning is as certain as the mathematical law that two and two make four. (Lenski)

Since the fall, all people are sinners and enslaved to sin, bond to self-centeredness, doomed to death, and blind to their slavery. (TLSB)

This was proven by what Jesus says in verse 37 “you are ready to kill me.”

In a very solemn manner, Jesus here proceeds to explain His statement regarding slavery or bondage. Every doer of sin is a slave of sin. He that commits a sin thereby places himself in its power, is bound and held captive absolutely. And therefore these Jews are servants, slaves, in the spiritual sense. (Kretzmann)

**8:35-36** A slave can never be sure of present or future status. Only the Son, Jesus Christ, can bring genuine freedom and make us children of God through faith. (TLSB)

Their claimed place in the family of Abraham (and thus, of God) now comes into question. A slave is property and has no rights and no permanent place in the household, nor has he any power to change his status. He is a slave. A son, on the other hand, has permanent status within the family and full rights of sonship. With this analogy, Jesus contrasts their *real* status with the one they *imagine* for themselves. The analogy, however, is pregnant, pointing beyond a son, *any* son, to *the* Son who will set them free from this bondage to sin. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 12, Part 4)

The slave will not continue (remain! abide!) in the master’s house forever, but “the son remains forever.” Only the son can change our status. “If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.” This is our most basic need: to be set free from slavery to sin, from sin’s power to destroy us and separate us from God. For the believer, sin, though present, is constantly forgiven. In Jesus, we are no longer under sin’s dominion, but Jesus’ lordship. We are sons who live in the house forever. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 18, Part 4)

**8:35** *slave does not remain in he house forever* – doolos. A slave didn’t even earn wages. He was the property of his master and was completely bound to his master’s will. Since the slave received no wages, all he had to look forward to after a hard day’s work was rest under the shade tree or in a shelter and even that wasn’t a certainty. There were no guarantees for him to depend on.

Although slaves were regarded as members of a household, they were not necessarily permanent, for they could be sold or otherwise separated from the household. Sons, on the other hand, were the permanent recipients of the father's inheritance. They stood to receive the inheritance because of their filial relationship with the father. One's status determined one's destiny. "The Son," v 36, must refer primarily to Christ and not generally to any son. Elsewhere in John's Gospel, the term *son* refers only to Christ. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

But such a slave has no part and right in the house, he has only duties to perform; he is not his own master and cannot speak of freedom. The servants of sin may now be outward members of the Kingdom, of the Church, but they will in the end be obliged to leave, they will be thrust out from the place where they have usurped the rights of children. (Kretzmann)

Slaves become part of a household and even experience benefits from the household. But their connection is tentative. They remain slaves and can be sent away because they have no lasting claims there. (PBC)

*son remains forever* – A son is a son forever. He belongs in the household and the household belongs to him. He is family. (PBC)

**8:36** *Son sets you free* – It is only the Son of God that is able to bring freedom, emancipation from sin and its service. He has earned freedom from sin for all men by paying the price, the redemption for their sin, His holy blood. That is the only true freedom, which the Son has thus earned and is offering to the whole world, which He wants also these Jews to accept. (Kretzmann)

Jesus cuts through the self-deception by observing that their actions and status are connected: "everyone who sins is a slave to sin" (v 34). Sin is not an occasional "oops." It is the ongoing manifestation of our mortal (as in *mortis*, i.e., death-bound) state. Hence the classical term "original sin," the sin of our origins, our roots. "Slaves come and go," Jesus tells them, "but the child has a home forever. So when the Son makes you free, you're really free!" (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 10, Part 4)

And that's what it's all about: that we become truly free (see v 32). What seemed to begin as a cordial conversation—Was Jesus not talking to those who "believed"?—has become a shockingly sharp exchange (8:37; compare 7:19–25). Behind it all is the Jews' rejection of the reality that Jesus comes directly from the heavenly Father (8:38). How stern, then, is his charge against those who have made this a debate with him (8:42, 44). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 4)

Note that the believing Jews were already set free, needing only to be fully established in their liberty. We are ourselves turned into sons adopted into the household of God, children of the Father, joint heirs with Christ. (Lenski)

"As Christ says, [baptized people] have been made free again. Therefore, they are able not only to hear the Word, but also to agree with it and accept it, although in great weakness." (FC SD II 67) (TLSB)

Jesus is here implicitly referring to his own Sonship with the Father as the basis of his authority to free from sin. Freedom from sin does not come from one's natural attachments, but from the Son, who is himself the free gift of the Father's love for the world (cf. Jn 3:16). Important is the idea that it is the Son who frees. He is the instrument of the Father's grace and love. The Father works only in and through the Son. Important, too, is the implicit allusion to Baptism, through which we are made to be sons of God in him who is the Son of the Father. In the Son, the Father of the Son becomes and is also our Father. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

**8:38** Note the contrasts: "I ... you"; "seen ... heard"; "the Father ... your father." Not until later (v. 44) did Jesus say who their father was, but it is clear even at this point that it was neither God nor Abraham as they claimed.

*I speak...i have seen...do what you have heard from your father* – There is always a choice. They could have what God the Father had for them or they could go on believing what they had been told. To follow Jesus, they would have to change and recognize that he was the Son of God and put their faith in him.

**8:31–38** Jews with a weak faith in Jesus balk when He says that true freedom comes through Him and His teaching. Humans are self-centered from birth and in bondage to sin, unable to please God (Rm 8:8). Through Jesus' sacrificial death and resurrection, He provides liberation from sin, death, and the devil to all who believe and are baptized into His name. • Grant that I may remain faithful to Your Word until my last hour, O Lord. Amen. (TLSB)

*You Are of Your Father the Devil*

**39** They answered him, "Abraham is our father." Jesus said to them, "If you were Abraham's children, you would be doing the works Abraham did, **40** but now you seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. This is not what Abraham did. **41** You are doing the works your father did." They said to him, "We were not born of sexual immorality. We have one Father—even God." **42** Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and I am here. I came not of my own accord, but he sent me. **43** Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word. **44** You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do 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 lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies. **45** But because I tell the truth, you do not believe me. **46** Which one of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me? **47** Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God."

**8:39–41** Their deeds revealed their parentage.

**8:39** *doing the works Abraham did* – Abraham trusted God, and God counted his faith as righteousness (Gn. 15:6). When Abraham's descendants opposed Jesus, they demonstrated thorough unbelief. (TLSB)

**8:41** *not born of sexual immorality.* May have been a slander aimed at Jesus' virgin birth. (CSB)

*not born of sexual immorality.* Possibly a sarcastic slur meant to anger Jesus by implying He was a bastard child. (TLSB)

*one Father—even God.* Earlier they had rebuked Jesus for making this claim (cf 5:18). (TLSB)

**8:43** *not understand.* The form of expression—the actual words. (CSB)

*what I say.* The content. The Jews were so convinced of their own preconceptions that they did not really hear what Jesus was saying (cf. v. 47). (CSB)

They could not comprehend Jesus’ teaching because they lacked spiritual discernment. (TLSB)

**8:44** *your father, the devil.* The Jews’ relationship to Satan was now stated explicitly. Jesus clearly excluded the idea of the universal fatherhood of God. (CSB)

Their physical ancestor may have been Abraham (v. 39), but they can trace their spiritual ancestry to the devil. (TLSB)

*you will* – Points to determination of will. Their problem was basically spiritual, not intellectual. Being oriented toward Satan, they were bent on murder (v. 37) and eventually would succeed (v. 28). (CSB)

The tempter’s lie brought death into the world. (Gn. 3). (TLSB)

*truth.* Foreign to Satan and those who are his (see 14:6). (CSB)

Satan used half-truths and outright lies to deceive Adam and Eve. “Although God creates and preserves nature, the cause of sin is located in the will of the wicked, that is, the devil and ungodly people. Without God’s help, this will turns itself away from God” (AC XIX 1). (TLSB)

**8:46** *which one of you convicts me of sin* – The asking of the question was more significant than the Jews’ failure to answer, in that it showed Jesus had a perfectly clear conscience. (CSB)

The burden of proof lay on Jesus’ opponents. (TLSB)

**8:47** *hears the words of God.* See 10:3–4; 1Jn 4:6. (CSB)

Jesus reaffirmed what He said in verse 45 and summarized the basic problem: they are not “of God.” (TLSB)

**8:39–47** Jesus traces the people’s refusal to believe in Him and His Word to their spiritual “father,” the devil himself. Beware—even today satanic deception lies behind opposition to Jesus and His teaching. Yet, God’s love revealed in the Gospel explains why His children by faith love their Savior and His Word. • “O LORD, I love the habitation of Your house and the place where Your glory dwells” (Ps 26:8). Amen. (TLSB)

*Before Abraham Was, I Am*

**48** The Jews answered him, “Are we not right in saying that you are a Samaritan and have a demon?” **49** Jesus answered, “**I do not have a demon, but I honor my Father, and you**

dishonor me. 50 Yet I do not seek my own glory; there is One who seeks it, and he is the judge. 51 Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death.” 52 The Jews said to him, “Now we know that you have a demon! Abraham died, as did the prophets, yet you say, ‘If anyone keeps my word, he will never taste death.’ 53 Are you greater than our father Abraham, who died? And the prophets died! Who do you make yourself out to be?” 54 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. 55 But you have not known him. 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 keep his word. 56 Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad.” 57 So the Jews said to him, “You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?” 58 Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.” 59 So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple.

**8:48-59** St. John states the principally evangelistic purpose of his Gospel, that the reader “may believe that Jesus is the Christ,” and that in the name of Jesus we may have life (20:31). In John 7–8, the evangelist especially highlights the growing confusion, hostility, and opposition to the person of Christ. Jesus traveled to Jerusalem for the Feast of Booths (or Tabernacles), celebrated in the fall as a harvest festival, first in secret (7:1, 10). The crowds were abuzz over the news of Jesus, some speaking out for him and others against, although in whispers because all were afraid of the Jewish leadership (7:12–13). Finally, Jesus begins to teach openly in the temple courts (7:14), addressing questions and issues pertaining to the source of his teaching, who he is and where he comes from. Apparently many believed in him (7:31, 40–41; 8:30–31), although their faith seemed to be superficial and vacillating, as demonstrated in the exchange between Jesus and the Jews in today’s Gospel. The scene for the assigned Gospel is still the temple courts in Jerusalem, specifically in the treasury where offerings were collected. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 17, Part 3)

This Gospel pericope is couched in Jesus’ “I am” statements, here Jesus calling himself the light of the world (Jn 8:12; 9:5). Jesus connects light with life: “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” (8:12). Immediately after our pericope, Jesus again says he is the light of the world as he heals a man born blind (9:1–7). Those who reject Jesus walk in darkness and death, whereas Jesus brings light and life. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 23, Part 3)

**8:48** *The Jews.* The phrase occurs about 70 times in this Gospel. Here it refers to the delegation sent by the Sanhedrin to look into the activities of an unauthorized teacher. (CSB)

*a Samaritan.* Probably to suggest that he was lax in Jewish observances—“No better than a Samaritan.” Or it may be a reflection on the birth of Jesus—perhaps claiming that his father was a Samaritan. (CSB)

This pericope is the continuation of the very public debate Jesus was having with the Jews in Jerusalem. He had just pointed out to them that they were not of God but of the devil (8:39–47). Naturally they respond harshly, using some of the strongest insults they could muster up. Samaritans were considered ethnic and religious half-breeds, unclean, to be avoided at all costs. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 17, Part 3)

To a Jew this was one of the most opprobrious epithets that could be used. The Samaritans were greatly hated and despised as heretics and schismatics. (CB)

This was a countercharge that Jesus, not they, operated under demonic influence. Cf Mt 12:24. (TLSB)

The frank argument of Jesus struck deeply, it cut the proud Jews to the quick. And they could not gainsay His words, their conscience was forced to admit their truth. And so they took recourse to jeering and abuse. They called Him a Samaritan, an adherent of the people that had retained only a part of the truth, whose members were considered heretics by the Jews and therefore believed to be possessed of evil spirits. That is the manner and style of the unbelievers of all times; when they find that they have no arguments against the truth, then they resort to calumny and blasphemy. (Kretzmann)

“Are we not right in saying that you are a Samaritan and have a demon?” In Middle Eastern cultures of this era, honor played a great role. The Jewish leaders publicly attack the honor of Jesus in this verse. Unknowingly, they also dishonor the Father, since they dishonor Christ (cf. 5:22–23). Thus they reject the Trinity. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 23, Part 3)

*have a demon* – Stung by the unveiled truth from Jesus’ lips, the Jews resorted to name-calling. Undoubtedly, to their way thinking, they were simply answering Him in kind. “You say the devil is our father? We say you’re a half-breed and you have a demon inside you.” (PBC)

**8:49** *I honor my Father* – Jesus simply denied their charge and pointed to the real problem. He was glorifying His heavenly Father, but the Jews were dishonoring Him. (PBC)

But Jesus does not permit the manner of the enemies to disturb Him. He most emphatically, but altogether quietly, spurns the charge, declaring that He was honoring His Father in all His works and words. In speaking as He did, He gave all honor to His Father. But the Jews, by their blasphemy, dishonored Him, and therefore also, by implication, His Father. Their foolish manner of acting does not stir Him to resentment, for the idea of seeking and furthering His own glory was absolutely foreign to Him. But from this they should not infer that their abuse of Him was a matter of indifference, which would not find its punishment. (Kretzmann)

Our Lord does not even honor the insult with a response; he loved the Samaritan people just as he loves all people (4:1–42; Lk 10:25–37; note in Luke Jesus’ use of *esplagchnisthē*, “compassion” [v 33], a messianic characteristic in the Gospels used only of Jesus or of parabolic characters representing Christ or the Father). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 17, Part 3)

The two words “honor” (*timaō*) and “dishonor” (*atimazō*) are of significance in the culture of Palestine. As Jerome Neyrey has pointed out (*Honor and Shame in the Gospel of Matthew* [Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998]), the idea of honor is powerful because it has to do with one’s value or worth in a social setting, in the public eye. Jesus honored the Father in that all he did and said was to be for the Father’s glory; the Jews were soiling not only Jesus’ reputation but also that of the Father, whom Jesus honored. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 17, Part 3)

**8:50** *he is the judge* – A mighty Vindicator stands behind Jesus, whom He describes only most briefly. He justifies Jesus, who upholds His Father’s honor; He condemns those who drag down His honor by reviling His Son and messenger. (Lenski)

By attacking Jesus, they were attacking God and bringing eternal condemnation upon themselves. (TLSB)

Jesus expands upon the thought here by pointing out that he (*egō* is emphatic) does not seek his own glory (*tēn doxan*), but that of the Father. Jesus commends himself to the One who will defend his honor because “there is One who seeks it, and he is the judge.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 17, Part 3)

“Are we not right in saying that you are a Samaritan and have a demon?” In Middle Eastern cultures of this era, honor played a great role. The Jewish leaders publicly attack the honor of Jesus in this verse. Unknowingly, they also dishonor the Father, since they dishonor Christ (cf. 5:22–23). Thus they reject the Trinity. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 23, Part 3)

There is One above, who is very much concerned about His Son's glory and honor; He seeks it, and He will pass judgment upon those that esteem the abuse of the Lord lightly. The sentence of condemnation which the blasphemers of Christ will bring down upon themselves is terrible beyond human comprehension. (Kretzmann)

**8:51** *truly, truly I say too you* - The glorious announcement of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is introduced by *amēn amēn legō humin*. What follows is a future more vivid condition. If what is stated in the protasis (the “if clause”) is true, then the apodosis (the “then clause”) most certainly will be the case. “Whoever keeps my word (that is, confesses my true identity as YHWH), he will surely not see death unto eternity” (for these insights the author is indebted to his colleague Dr. Charles Gieschen). The word *tēreō* has the meaning of “to keep,” “to pay attention to,” or “to observe” (*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957], 822). Sometimes the word has been translated legalistically (cf. the NIV rendering of Mt 28:20), however, “to obey” is not listed in *A Greek-English Lexicon*. This verse is clear Gospel—faith in Jesus will certainly bring life eternal with the Father. Jesus is, of course, talking about eternal, spiritual death, something the Jews fail to realize, as shown in the next verse. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 17, Part 3)

*my word*. The whole of Jesus’ message, which when accepted brings deliverance from death. (CSB)

To remain in the word is that of keeping an eye on the word, so that it is not tampered with but is kept inviolate. (Lenski)

He underscored His Word (Logos) again. The way to know the Word, who is God, who is Jesus, is to keep His Word. Believe the message of Jesus and you will never see death. (PBC)

The Jews should therefore remember, as Jesus solemnly declares to them, that a man that keeps His saying, that diligently attends to His words, His Gospel, and accepts them for use in His life without remonstrance and unbelief, shall not see death unto all eternity. Temporal death will have no terrors for Him, being merely the gate and entrance to eternal life. Here was the sweetest, the most wonderful Gospel-news, calculated to strengthen and comfort all believers of that and the present time. (Kretzmann)

*never see death* – Experience everlasting death. (TLSB)

“Are we not right in saying that you are a Samaritan and have a demon?” In Middle Eastern cultures of this era, honor played a great role. The Jewish leaders publicly attack the honor of

Jesus in this verse. Unknowingly, they also dishonor the Father, since they dishonor Christ (cf. 5:22–23). Thus they reject the Trinity. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 23, Part 3)

**8:52** *now we know* – Far from seeing the truth, the Jews now were sure that Jesus had a demon. Even Abraham and the prophets died. How could Jesus be sane and say that anyone who kept His Word would never taste death? Where faith is denied and human reason takes over, people must conclude that Jesus is making preposterous claims. Only through faith do we see that He is in truth the Son of God. (PBC)

This is not only intellectual acceptance of Jesus’ teaching but also faith in and obedience to it (cf. v 55; Mt 28:20). (TLSB)

Jesus’ statement makes no sense to the Jews’ worldly minds. Abraham and the prophets obviously died! Their only recourse is to repeat the charge that they now know (*egnōkamen*—the perfect emphasizes how sure they are of it) that he has a demon. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 17, Part 3)

*taste death* – Reference to physical death here, in contrast to spiritual

Death in v 51. (TLSB)

The saying of Jesus that the believer in Him was sure of obtaining eternal life was beyond the comprehension of the Jews. And it increased their anger and resentment to note that Jesus ascribed such power to Himself. They concluded rightly that the Lord here claimed to possess supernatural attributes. And so they repeat their Blander and blasphemy that He is possessed of an evil spirit. They understood the saying of temporal death, and since they supposed Jesus to be a mere man and surely of smaller importance than Abraham and the prophets, they felt that He was arrogating to Himself powers which were altogether out of His reach. If those men had died, He surely could not speak of granting safety and deliverance from death. (Kretzmann)

**8:53** *Are you greater ... ?* The question was framed to expect the answer “No.” This is ironic, since Jesus was indeed far greater than Abraham, even as he was greater than Moses. (CSB)

The answer to the Jews’ question, “Are you greater than our father Abraham, who died? And [are you greater than] the prophets who died?” (author’s translation), is, of course, yes, something that was impossible for the Jews to believe in their spiritual blindness. “Who do you make yourself out to be?” One can easily see the anger of the Jews coming to a boil. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 17, Part 3)

“Are you greater than our father Abraham, who died?” The Jewish leaders introduce their question with *mē*, which anticipates a negative response. In this way they again reject Jesus’ divinity and the Trinity. Additionally, they are working with a different Old Testament hermeneutic that lacks focus on the resurrection and eternal life (cf. Mt 22:23–33). In contrast, Jesus emphasizes life in this context. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 23, Part 3)

Their conclusion was a bit of sound arguing. Jesus did indeed place Himself upon a much higher level than the prophets. But the question of the Jews was impudent in spite of all: What do You expect us to take You for? Their words plainly showed their contempt of Him and of the fact that they believed Him to be extolling Himself at the expense of truth. (Kretzmann)

**8:54** *my glory is nothing* – That would prove worthless. Many before Him and many since have claimed to be messiah's for their own glory and did no good. (PBC)

The answer to the Jews' question, "Are you greater than our father Abraham, who died? And [are you greater than] the prophets who died?" (author's translation), is, of course, yes, something that was impossible for the Jews to believe in their spiritual blindness. "Who do you make yourself out to be?" One can easily see the anger of the Jews coming to a boil. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 17, Part 3)

But Jesus insists that He has His honor from His Father. If He were guilty of exalting Himself at the expense of truth, His glory would suffer at once and come to naught. God never permits an unworthy person to arrogate to himself privileges which properly belong to Him alone. But in this case God Himself was giving evidence on every hand that He stood behind His Son, in His preaching and in His miracles. Now the Jews made the boastful statement that God was their Father. If that were true, then they must be conscious of the fact that God is zealous and jealous of the honor of the Son, whom He has sent. But their proud boast cannot be true, they cannot have a correct idea and knowledge of Him. Their entire life and manner of acting shows that. (Kretzmann)

**8:55** *you...do not know him* – They didn't glorify Jesus because they didn't really know their own God anymore. For them to say they knew God but then to reject Jesus made them liars. (PBC)

Jesus states that if he were to deny that he knows the Father (*oida*), he would be a liar like them. The future more vivid condition of this statement adds weight to his declaration. The Jews are liars because they say that God is their Father, yet they dishonor (*atimazete*, v 49) the one the Father has sent. Adding further contrast to the unbelief of the Jews, Jesus adds that he does know the Father and he keeps (*tērō*) his word. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 17, Part 3)

In the context, Jesus distinguishes the manner in which he, compared to the Jewish leaders, knows the Father. The verb choice may contribute to this distinction, since *ginōskō* (used of the Jews) can refer to a beginning knowledge, whereas *oida* (used of Jesus) can refer to an innate knowledge. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 23, Part 3)

The Jews had lost sight of the Word of God that promised Christ's coming. They had kept God's Word only selectively and added to it. Jesus spoke the truth, but the Jew followed their father, the devil. (PBC)

They have not acquired knowledge of the Father, either by observation or by teaching, but the knowledge of Christ is of such a nature as to exclude all possibility of a mistake as to the essence and qualities of God. He has a direct and essential knowledge of His Father. Were He to deny that He has such a direct knowledge of God, then He would be a liar and on a level with the Jews. But He is the possessor of the right knowledge, out of which grows and follows a glad and joyful keeping of His Word. Note: This close connection between the actual knowledge of God by faith and the doing of His will is indispensable in the Christian life; the keeping of God's Word must follow the acceptance of this Word in faith. And with Jesus this keeping was of a peculiarly wonderful character, since He was carrying out the will of God for the salvation of the world. And now Jesus offers a bit of proof for the fact that He is greater than Abraham. For this patriarch, who was their ancestor according to the flesh, was filled with exultant joy over the fact that he should see the day of Christ. The wonderful promises which were given him with regard to the Messiah filled his heart with joy ineffable. (Kretzmann)

**8:56** *Your father Abraham.* Physically they descended from Abraham. (TLSB)

*my day.* All that was involved in the incarnation. Jesus probably was not referring to any one occasion but to Abraham's general joy in the fulfilling of the purposes of God in Christ, by which all nations on earth would receive blessing (Ge 18:18). (CSB)

To demonstrate that his honor/glory is not self-given, Jesus declares that their father Abraham had indeed rejoiced at seeing the day of Jesus and was glad in it. Abraham saw it when his son, Isaac, was born (Heb 11:11–13), and thus the promise to make of his descendants a great nation (Gen 12:2–3) was being fulfilled. The promised coming Savior brought joy to the life of Abraham, just as the fulfilled promise of the Savior brings joy and gladness to the Christian today. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 17, Part 3)

*he saw it.* In faith, from afar. (CSB)

By faith, Abraham saw God's plan of salvation fulfilled (Heb 11:8–10). Bernard of Clairvaux: "So are we to think of all the saints of that time, that they were born just as ourselves under the power of darkness, because of original sin, but rescued before they died, and that by nothing else but the blood of Christ" (SLSB, p 285 (TLSB)

"Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad." Christ's "day" is parallel to the Old Testament "Day of the Lord," which includes rescue for God's people but condemnation for those who reject him (e.g., Zeph 1:14–15; Zech 13:1–2; 14:7–9; Mal 4:5–6). Abraham received a preview of Christ's gracious "Day," particularly in two events. In the birth of Isaac, whose name means "he laughs," Abraham rejoiced at this miraculous birth that previewed the greater miraculous birth of Christ, the ultimate source of blessing to many nations. Second, in the near sacrifice of Isaac, Abraham received a preview of the sacrifice of God's own Son. Additionally, since Abraham still lives at the time of Christ (v 51; Mt 22:23–33), he joyfully views the day of Christ. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 23, Part 3)

In this way Abraham did see the Lord, His Savior, by faith, and died in happy trust in Him. But this last saying the Jews completely misunderstood. (Kretzmann)

**8:57** *not yet fifty years old.* A generous allowance for Jesus' maximum possible age. Jesus was about 30 when he began his ministry (Lk 3:23). (CSB)

Again we see the stubborn worldly perspective of the Jews. In their rage and disbelief they are unable to understand what Jesus is saying. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 17, Part 3)

Perhaps a reference to the priests' ineligibility for service when they passed age 50 (Num 4:3); or just a round number indicating that Jesus, in His 30's (Lk 3:23), was not even close to Abraham's era. In any case, Jesus' claim sounded preposterous to them. (TLSB)

They had the idea that the life of Jesus and that of Abraham on earth had been contemporaneous. Full of indignation they cried out to Him: Fifty years Thou art not yet, and Abraham Thou hast seen! The very idea was preposterous. (Kretzmann)

**8:58** *I am!* A solemnly emphatic declaration echoing God's great affirmation in Ex 3:14. Jesus did not say "I was" but "I am," expressing the eternity of his being and his oneness with the

Father (see 1:1). With this climactic statement Jesus concludes his speech that began with the related claim, “I am the light of the world” (v. 12). (CSB)

Another crucial statement is introduced with *amēn, amēn, legō humin*. Jesus clearly declares his divinity by stating that even before the time of Abraham (*prin Abraam genesthai*), he is. *genesthai* being in the aorist highlights the single event of the period in time of Abraham. *egō eimi* is in the present tense, which underscores the eternal nature of Christ. It is the same name God applies to himself in Ex 3:14. We do not know precisely what Hebrew or Aramaic word Jesus would have used, but it is quite likely, from the reaction of the Jews, that it was the Tetragrammaton. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 17, Part 3)

“Before Abraham was, I am.” Jesus reveals himself as divine, eternal, the center of the Old Testament (Ex 3:14). John frequently includes these “I am” statements with a discourse or miracle (e.g., 6:35; 10:14; 11:25). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 23, Part 3)

Declaration of Jesus’ eternal preexistence (1:1; cf Is 41:4). (TLSB)

As Jesus Christ is truly and eternally divine, his kindness, compassion, and grace, in coming into the world, taking upon him human nature, and dying upon the cross, surpass all finite comprehension, and lay upon all to whom he is revealed and unspeakable obligations to love and obey him. (CB)

But Jesus repeats the thought with an unusually strong affirmation, that before Abraham came into being, He was, He is, thus asserting His eternity. Our Savior, the humble and despised Jesus of Nazareth, is the eternal God. That is our comfort, to know that in our redemption the suffering and death of the eternal God is lying in the balance. It is the eternal God that delivered us from eternal damnation. That the eternal God suffered for some hours on the cross, that has taken away the power of hell and damnation. (Kretzmann)

**8:59** *stones to throw*. The Jews could not interpret Jesus’ claim as other than blasphemy, for which stoning was the proper penalty (Lev 24:16). (CSB)

Presumably on the grounds that Jesus was guilty of blasphemy (Lev. 24:16). (TLSB)

The reaction of the Jews was immediate, and it was fierce. No doubt there were many large stones lying around, as the temple was undergoing repairs. However, Jesus “was hidden” (*ekrubē*, author’s translation; from *kruptō*). His time had not yet come. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 17, Part 3)

In their stubbornness and blindness, the Jews refuse to recognize Jesus in spite of all the evidence—both his miracles (usually *sēmeia*, “signs,” in John) and his teaching—that points to him as the long-awaited Messiah. Having rejected Christ, their only recourse is to be rid of him, for if they were to admit that he is who he says, they would have found themselves guilty of the deepest shame and dishonor, the disastrous transgression of blasphemy. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 17, Part 3)

*hid himself*—Or, “was hidden,” that is by divine concealment. (TLSB)

But this was too much for the Jews. They could no longer contain themselves; they picked up stones to put Him to death for what they considered blasphemy. But their murderous intention

was not carried out. Jesus did not merely hide Himself, to slip out unobserved, but He made Himself in visible. by His almighty power: Through their very midst He went out, unhindered, while His enemies were struck with temporary blindness and vainly endeavored to harm Him. That same almighty Jesus is the Protector of His own at all times, and may well make use of His power in their interest, whenever He deems it necessary. There must be no lack of trust in Him. (Kretzmann)

**8:48–59** The confrontation between Jesus and the Pharisees reaches a climax when the Pharisees attempt to stone Him for claiming to be the preexistent Son of God. The Bible's witness that Jesus is true God and the only way to heaven receives intense and sometimes virulent opposition today. Pray for those confused or offended by the truth about Jesus, for "God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rm 5:8). • O God, grant true repentance to those whose hearts are turned against You. Amen. (TLSB)