

#69 "I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD" John 8:12-59

The Feast of Tabernacles had ended, and Jesus remained to teach the people outside the temple. Shortly thereafter, the Pharisees and scribes brought a woman caught in adultery to entrap Jesus (John 7:53-8:11); however, their attempts failed, and now Jesus calls out their sin and darkness. John 8:12-59 exposes the great ignorance within the Jewish leadership in Jesus' day.

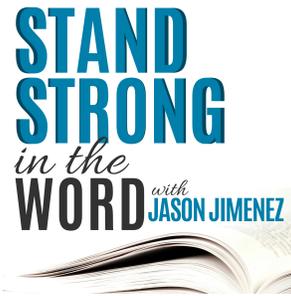
JOHN 8:12-59

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 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.

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



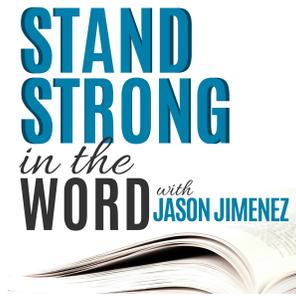
free, you will be free indeed. ³⁷I know that you are offspring of Abraham; yet you seek to kill me because my word finds no place in you. ³⁸I speak of what I have seen with my Father, and you do what you have heard from your father.”

³⁹They answered him, “Abraham is our father.” Jesus said to them, “If you were Abraham’s children, you would be doing the works Abraham did, ⁴⁰but 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. ⁴¹You are doing the works your father did.” They said to him, “We were not born of sexual immorality. We have one Father—even God.” ⁴²Jesus 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. ⁴³Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word. ⁴⁴You 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. ⁴⁵But because I tell the truth, you do not believe me. ⁴⁶Which one of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me? ⁴⁷Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God.”

⁴⁸The Jews answered him, “Are we not right in saying that you are a Samaritan and have a demon?” ⁴⁹Jesus answered, “I do not have a demon, but I honor my Father, and you dishonor me. ⁵⁰Yet I do not seek my own glory; there is One who seeks it, and he is the judge. ⁵¹Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death.” ⁵²The 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.’ ⁵³Are you greater than our father Abraham, who died? And the prophets died! Who do you make yourself out to be?” ⁵⁴Jesus answered, “If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing. It is my Father who glorifies me, of whom you say, ‘He is our God.’ ⁵⁵But 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. ⁵⁶Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad.” ⁵⁷So the Jews said to him, “You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?” ⁵⁸Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.” ⁵⁹So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple.

1. ***“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” (12)***—During the Feast of Tabernacles, the Jews would light up the outer courts of the temple as a way to remember the pillar of fire that led the Hebrews through the wilderness. Jesus uses this occurrence to point to Him being the everlasting light (affirmation of His deity).

A. ***Light of life***—(see Pss. 43:3; 119:105). “In Him was life, and the life was the *light* of men” (1:4). The Word was among men as light before the incarnation (1:9; 9:5), and light came with the incarnation (3:19–21; 8:12; 12:46). Christ is light through the illuminating energy of the Spirit (14:21, 26; 16:13; 1 John 2:20, 27), which is received through love (14:22, 23). The object of Christ’s

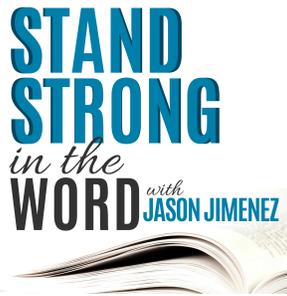


work is to make men sons of light (12:36, 46), and to endow them with the light of life (8:12)."¹

- B. "Jesus had called his followers "the light of the world" (Matt. 5:14), but that was light reflected from him. Already Jesus (the Logos) had been called the true light of men (1:9; 3:19). The Psalmist calls God his Light (27:1). So Isa. 60:19. At the feast of tabernacles in the Court of the Women where Jesus was on this day (8:20) there were brilliant candelabra and there was the memory of the pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night. But with all this background this supreme and exclusive claim of Jesus (repeated in 9:5) to being the light of the whole world (of Gentiles as well as of Jews) startled the Pharisees and challenged their opposition."²
- C. ***So the Pharisees said to him, "You are bearing witness about yourself; your testimony is not true" (13)***—The Pharisees challenge Jesus' claim because they are blinded by the darkness. Jesus told Nicodemus, "And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God (Jn. 3:19-21)."
- D. ***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." (14)***—Jesus is no ordinary person. He is God who came down from heaven and took on flesh and would return to heaven. He sees things in light of eternity; while they are blinded by their stupidity.
- E. ***"You judge according to the flesh; I judge no one. Yet even if I do judge, my judgment is true, for it is not I alone who judge, but I and the Father who sent me" (15-16)***—The Pharisees respond to Jesus' claims as acting judges over Him. However, Jesus points out that it is His Father who approves of Him and sent Him to redeem the world. The First Advent of Jesus was to redeem the world, not judge it.
- F. ***"In your Law (a monopoly; possession) it is written that the testimony of two people is true. I am the one who bears witness about myself, and the Father who sent me bears witness about me" (17-18)***—Jewish law

¹ Marvin Richardson Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*, vol. 2 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1887), 166.

² A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1933), Jn 8:12.



required two witnesses to testify to the facts/evidence (Deut. 17:6; 19:15).

Jesus gives the Father as the second witness to verify that He is the Messiah.

John 5:37, "And the Father who sent me has himself borne witness about me.

His voice you have never heard, his form you have never seen."

2. ***They said to him therefore, "Where is your Father?" (19a)***—Because they couldn't see and verify Jesus' witness (The Father)—His testimony wasn't true. Moreover, this challenge to Jesus was also a direct attack against His virgin birth; and a very humiliating question to ask a man in the East.

- A. ***Jesus answered, "You know neither me nor my Father. If you knew me, you would know my Father also." These words he spoke in the treasury (public part of the temple), as he taught in the temple; but no one arrested him, because his hour had not yet come (19b-20)***—Jesus doesn't allow their personal attacks regarding His paternity to weigh Him down. Rather, He turns it on them by pointing out that they don't even know God the way they think they do.

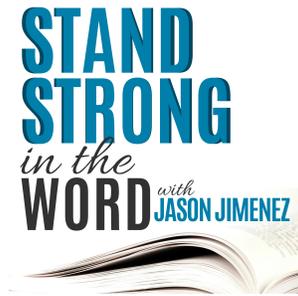
3. ***So he said to them again, "I am going away, and you will seek me, and you will die in your sin. Where I am going, you cannot come" (21)***—Jesus focuses back on their sin; and how they will not be able to go to heaven because of their unbelief. If the Pharisees and scribes don't follow Him on earth; then they won't follow Him to heaven.

- A. ***So the Jews said, "Will he kill himself, since he says, 'Where I am going, you cannot come'?" (22)***—According to Jewish teaching, a person who commits suicide would go to hell. Another cutting insult to make Jesus look like a deranged person. Prior to this, the Jews thought He meant He would go to the non-Jews in other regions (7:35).

- B. ***He said to them, "You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. I told you that you would die in your sins, for unless you believe that I am he you will die in your sins." (23-24)***—Jesus lays out a contrast: He comes from above (not of this world) and they come from below (of this world). ***I AM He***—In the Greek is the enigmatic "I AM" (see Isa. 43:10).

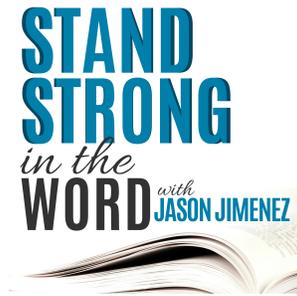
4. ***So they said to him, "Who are you?" (25a)***—This would normally be taken as a sincere question; but coming from the Pharisees—it was not. They continued to have contempt for Jesus. Notice the questions they've been asking Jesus: *Where is your Father* (8:19); *Will He kill Himself* (8:22); *Who are You?* (8:25).

- A. ***Jesus said to them, "Just what I have been telling you from the beginning. 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" (25b-26)***—If Jesus wanted to, He could expose all their sins and reveal His heavenly glory.



Yet, He prevails by speaking the truth that He has been sent by the Father. If they rejected Jesus—it's because they rejected the Father. Which, of course, they did because they never saw God as their Father. This was an unknown relationship to the average Jew.

5. ***So Jesus said to them, “When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he (I AM), and that I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me. And he who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone, for I always (at all times) do the things that are pleasing to him.” As he was saying these things, many believed in him. (28-30)***—Jesus will be ***lifted up*** on the cross (Isaiah 52:13, “Behold, my servant shall act wisely; he shall be high and lifted up, and shall be exalted.”); and glorified in His resurrection. ***Always do the things that are pleasing to him***—Jesus perfectly serves and obeys the Father. His enemies could not find anything wrong with His speech or actions (4:34; 5:30).
 - A. John 3:14-15, “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.”
 - B. John 12:32, “And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.”
6. ***So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, “If you abide (to remain; to stay) in my word, you are truly (nothing false) my disciples, and you will know (to have knowledge; experience) the truth, and the truth will set you free (to be released).” (31-32)***—Jesus turns His attention on the Jews that believe in Him, and calls them to be set free from the darkness of the religious leaders and become His disciples.
 - A. ***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?’” (33)***—This isn't a response from Jesus' newfound disciples. It's coming from the Jews who rejected Jesus. The denial of enslavement is striking. The Jews have been enslaved by Egyptians, Babylonians, Persians, and Romans.
 - B. ***Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave (subservient to control) to sin. The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed (34-36)***—The Jewish leaders felt Abraham gave them a covering; yet Jesus calls out their habitual sin and false belief that lineage can save them. Jesus boldly proclaims only He can set them free from their bondage of sin.
 - 1) R.V.G. Tasker, “So the slave of sin cannot by himself change his status. He cannot convert himself, nor can he be converted by any fellow-sinner... The liberator from our bondage must come from outside the ranks of enslaved humanity.”



2) Only Jesus is the true Son to the Father and seed of Abraham.
Galatians 3:16, “Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, “And to offsprings,” referring to many, but referring to one, “And to your offspring,” who is Christ.”

C. ***I know that you are offspring of Abraham; yet you seek to kill me because my word finds no place in you. I speak of what I have seen with my Father, and you do what you have heard from your father.” (37-38)***—

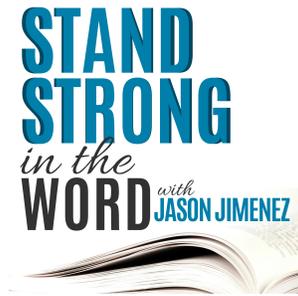
Jesus acknowledged Abraham was certainly their father *genetically*, but not *spiritually*. Jesus obeyed His heavenly Father; whereas the Jews did not.

D. ***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, 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. 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.” (39-41)***—Once again, the Jews defend themselves on account of their Abrahamic lineage. However, Jesus disputes their conduct, beliefs and practices that aren’t consistent to the life of Abraham. Something John the Baptist even warned them of (see Lk. 3:8). ***We were not born of sexual immorality***—The Jews believed Jesus’ birth came from sexual immorality. This indicates the Jewish leaders did considerable research into Jesus’ birth and childhood. Not to get to know who He *really* is, but to find something they could use against Him.

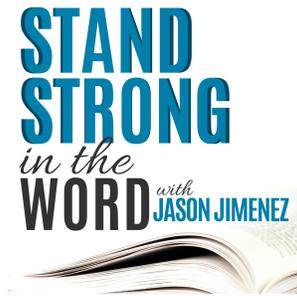
1) The New Testament credits Abraham’s faith and obedience (see Rom. 4:3; Gal. 3:6; Js. 2:23; Heb. 11:8).

E. ***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. Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word (42-43)***—By rejecting Jesus, they were rejecting God the Father. Pointing out how truly lost the Jews were in their relationship with God.

1) ***You are of your father*** (chief; ruler) ***the devil, and your will*** (desire; wish; want) ***is to do your father’s desires*** (engage in an act morally wrong). ***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 (44)***—Jesus not only calls out their lack of relationship with God, but points to their spiritual parentage—the devil. The religious leaders beliefs, actions and denials reflected the devil than that of Jesus.



- 2) John 8:44 gives great insight into the nature of Satan. (1) He has a legion of followers; (2) His desires are morally evil; (3) He is a murderer; (4) There is no truth in him; (5) He is a liar and deceiver at his core.
7. **The Jews answered him, “Are we not right in saying that you are a Samaritan and have a demon?” (48)**—The Jews couldn’t correct Jesus so they attempted to link Him as a Samaritan (a despised people group).
- A. **Jesus answered, “I do not have a demon, but I honor my Father, and you dishonor me (49)**—You can’t honor God and be demonized.
 - B. **Yet I do not seek my own glory; there is One who seeks it, and he is the judge (50)**—The Jews were playing judge over Jesus and His ministry. However, it is Jesus who is The Judge over the living and the dead.
 - C. **Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death” (51)**—Another remarkable claim that points to Jesus divinity.
8. **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.’ Are you greater than our father Abraham, who died? And the prophets died! Who do you make yourself out to be?” (52-53)**—The Jews think they finally caught Jesus in a blasphemous claim about Abraham. Jesus never said *taste death*. This was another ploy the Jews used to try and convict Jesus in front of the people.
- A. **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.’ 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. Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad.” (54-56)**—Jesus goes back to His pivotal argument. That He was sent by the Father; and the Father glorifies Him. The Jewish leaders believed they knew God, but if they truly did—then they would’ve believed Jesus to be the Messiah. **I do know him and I keep his word—Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day**—Jesus’ statement makes Him greater than Abraham and also points out that Abraham anticipated His coming.
 - B. **So the Jews said to him, “You are not yet fifty years old (retirement age), and have you seen Abraham?” (57)**—Of course, the Jews denied the deity of Jesus; and therefore, thought He was mad for believing He existed before Abraham.
 - C. **Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.” So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple (58-59)**—In John 8, Jesus made the statement “I AM” (8:24; 8:28; 8:58). It was very clear to the audience what Jesus was saying. I



AM was a divine claim belonging to Yahweh (see Ex. 3:13-14; Isa. 43:10). The Jews picked up stones to kill Jesus because He claimed to be God (see Lev. 24:16).

- 1) Barclay comments, "The ancient Greek phrase is *ego emi*, which was the same term used in the Greek translation of the Old Testament in Jesus' day to describe the Voice from the burning bush. "All the previous lightning flashes pale into significance before the blaze of this passage."