

(Through the Bible) John 7-8

by Chuck Smith

Jesus' teachings at the Feast of Tabernacles caused a division among the people, with some believing in him and others accusing him of doing wrong.

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Scripture: John 7:53

Topics: "Gods Love", "Salvation Experience"

Description

In this sermon, a young man shares his experience of being a Jew who has accepted Jesus as his Messiah. When he begins speaking in Hebrew, the Jewish guides react with hatred and bitterness. The speaker emphasizes that deep down, every person has a thirst for God, even if they try to cover it up. He uses the example of the Samaritan woman at the well to illustrate how Jesus can fulfill this need for a meaningful relationship with God. The speaker concludes by describing moments when he personally feels overwhelmed by God's love and goodness, and encourages others to come to Jesus and experience the overflowing cup of life.

Transcript

So we turn now in our Bibles to the seventh chapter of the Gospel according to John. After these things, Jesus walked in Galilee, for he would not walk in Jewry because the Jews sought to kill him. At this point, John begins the record of the last six months of Jesus' ministry.

And so you'll notice how much time and attention John spends in the last six months of his ministry, pointing out the fact that Jesus is no longer walking so openly in the area of Judea among the Jews. In fact, from the other Gospel records, we know that at this point, Jesus went first up to the area of Tyre and Sidon with his disciples, then on over the hill to Caesarea Philippi, which is at the base of Mount Hermon. Up into Mount Hermon, where he was transfigured.

And of course, there at Caesarea Philippi, Peter's great confession. Now he is again in the area of Galilee, and he stays pretty much away from Jerusalem, except for the record that we will receive here in chapter 7 through chapter 10, when he goes down for the Feast of the Tabernacles, and then when he goes down for the final visit at the Feast of the Passover six months later, when he is crucified. So at this point, we're entering into the final six months of the ministry of Jesus before the crucifixion.

Now the Jews' Feast of Tabernacles was at hand. The Feast of Tabernacles was the feast in which they remembered God's preservation of their fathers through the forty years of wandering in the wilderness. They could not have survived.

A million people could not have survived forty years in the desert. There's no way the desert could support that number of people who were at that point nomads, except the Lord had provided. But God did provide.

He guided them by day with a cloud, by night with a pillar of fire. And He provided them with quail. He provided them with manna.

He provided them with water out of the rock. And so it was a time of the celebration of God's miraculous provision for their fathers in keeping them through that forty years of their wandering in the wilderness. And so this Feast of the Tabernacles, which took place in the tenth month of our calendar, the seventh month of the Jewish calendar, was at hand.

And his brothers said unto him, Why don't you depart from here and go to Judea, that your disciples also may see the works that you do? The brothers here, no doubt, refer to the actual half-brothers of Jesus. James and Jude, Simon, and they have appeared another time in this story when they came with Mary to rescue him from the crowds. And at this point, they do not believe in his claims.

But they are saying, Why don't you go down to Judea, that they might see your works and believe? For there is no man that does anything in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If you are doing these things, show yourself to the world. And so this encouragement from his brothers.

For neither did his brothers believe in him. Then Jesus said unto them, My time, or my season, is not yet come, but yours is already here. Jesus talks now much about his hour.

When he talks of his hour, he is talking of the cross itself. Now he is talking about just the season, that is, the season of being revealed. They are saying, Why don't you go down and reveal yourself? You know, rather than hiding out in secret, show yourself openly.

And he is saying, The season is not yet come, but yours is already here. And the world cannot hate you, but it hates me, because I testify of it, that its works are evil. So you go up unto this feast, and I will not yet go up to the feast, for my season is not yet fully come.

And when he had said these words unto them, he stayed there in Galilee. But when his brothers were gone up, then he also went up to the feast, but not openly, but as it were in secret. And then the Jews sought him at the feast and said, Where is he? And there was a lot of murmuring among the people concerning him, for there was a sharp division among them.

Some said, He is a good man, and others said, No, he is deceiving the people. Albeit, no man spoke openly of him for fear of the Jews. So already there was the threat of the leadership against Jesus.

It was already declared that if anybody should acknowledge that he was the Messiah, they would be put out of the synagogues. And this division, a lot of people had been touched and healed by Jesus. And so they were saying, He is a good man, and the others were saying, Oh no, he is a deceiver, he is deceiving the people.

And so this controversy had arisen, and Christ became a very controversial figure. And it was sort of the buzz at the Feast of the Tabernacles. Everybody was talking about him.

Everybody was wondering about him. And it was just a real buzz among the people who had gathered. Now, in about the middle of the feast, Jesus went up into the temple and taught.

He wasn't there, evidently, at the beginning of the feast, or didn't at least show up until about the middle of the feast, after about three days. And the Jews marveled, saying, How does this man know letters, having never learned? Gramata, how does this man know the accent of the learned, is what they are saying. They had, in those days too, that sophisticated accent of the intellectuals, much like we hear from the Chabad boys.

There was that certain accent of sophistication that was sort of exclusive in the university ranks. And here Jesus began to talk with them with that accent of the intellectuals. And they said, How did he learn that accent, not having gone to the university? How knoweth this man the letters, having never learned? And Jesus answered them and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me.

You want to know how I learned? The doctrine isn't mine, it's his who sent me. And Jesus again is declaring, I have been sent here. If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God or whether I speak of myself.

He that speaks of himself seeks his own glory. But he that seeks his glory that sent him, the same is true, and there is no unrighteousness in him. Now, Jesus is making some pretty dramatic claims here.

He's saying, If I came and I started speaking of myself, it would be because I'm seeking my own glory, because that's what a person who is seeking glory does. He talks about himself, he boasts of himself. But if I come seeking the glory of him who sent me, then the same is true, that witness is true.

He's not seeking glory for himself. He's seeking glory for the one that sent him. And there is no unrighteousness in him.

Now, in a little while, Jesus is going to challenge them as they get into this dispute. And he said, Which of you can convince me of sin? Which of you can point out a sin that I've ever committed? Boy, no way that we could say that, is there? No way could we make this kind of a claim. There is no unrighteousness in me.

And so these are pretty radical claims that Jesus is making before the people. He said, Did not Moses give you the law? And yet, none of you keep the law. So why are you going about to kill me? An interesting thing.

They were accusing him, of course, and the thing is still festering. The last time he was down there, you remember he was at the pool of Bethesda. And he told the lame man to take his bed and walk.

And the lame man took his bed and started to walk. And the Jews caught him and said, Sabbath day, how come you're carrying your bed? And he said, The guy who healed me told me to take my bed and walk. And they said, Who was it? He said, I don't know.

And so Jesus later found the guy in the temple and he said, You know, go your way and sin no more. And he ran and told the Jews it was Jesus. And from that time, they sought to kill him because he had done it

on the Sabbath day.

And that is still festering in the Jewish leadership. This fact that he had violated their Sabbath law. So he said, Look, Moses gave you the law.

And yet, none of you keep it. So why are you going about to kill me? We were in Israel about three years ago. And there were some young people, Jewish young people up in the northern part of Israel who had received Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

And they were having Bible studies and worship in their homes. In one of the little areas there in the northern Galilee. And they were under severe persecution from the Jewish community.

In fact, while we were there, some of the young people of the Jewish Defense League came in or from one of the communities came in and tore up their house, beat them up, took an axe and broke the refrigerator and broke up all of their furniture and just made shreds of their house because they were Christians. And as far as the Jews were concerned, they were traitors, having left Judaism according to their thinking and received Jesus Christ. So we had heard of these Christians and we had invited them to come and to share with our group.

We had some guides who were all sweet and smiles and, you know, talking about Jesus and Jesus did this and the Lord did this and all. And they were very sweet and personable guides. And some of the people on the tour even thought that they were close to salvation.

And when this young man got up to speak to our group about being a Jew, having accepted Jesus, he first of all said, before I speak to you and share with you my love for Jesus as my Messiah, I would first like to say something to my friends here. And he began to speak in Hebrew. And the moment he began to speak, it was like ice water was poured over the Jewish guides.

It was like a mask was suddenly pulled off and their smiling faces turned and there was hatred. There was gnashing of teeth. There was bitterness.

It was really tense. In fact, they were ready to rip their clothes almost and grab stones and stone the kid. And I thought, what in the world is he saying to them, you know, that is creating such a reaction? This one man who at that point was the head over the Israeli defense forces in northern Israel and a dear friend of ours who really is an easy going kind of a guy and not at all religious, though he's a Jew, he's not at all religious.

Great big old guy and a very respected leader there in northern Israel. He was with a group of the men from the kibbutz. And as this young man was talking to them in Hebrew, these men from the kibbutz became so incensed, they started saying among themselves, let's kill him when he leaves here tonight.

Let's kill him. And they were really ready to kill him. And this friend of ours, Yoram, said to them in Hebrew, you guys keep Sabbath? They said, no.

He said, are you guys religious? No. Well, then why do you want to kill this guy? Just because he says he believes that Jesus is the Messiah and he was able to talk them out of killing him because he showed them that they weren't really religious. What's your what's the big deal? What's your what's your problem? You know, why do you want to kill him? You're not at all religious.

You guys just on a religious kick. So what's your problem? But it's interesting here. Jesus said, look, Moses gave you the law, but none of you are keeping it.

So why are you trying to kill me? Because you think I violated your Sabbath day law. You're not keeping the law yourself. And so the people answered and said, you have a devil who's going about to kill you.

And Jesus answered and said unto them, I have done one work and you all marvel. Moses, therefore, gave unto you circumcision, not because it is of Moses. It actually preceded Moses.

It came from Abraham, but it was of the fathers. That is, it came from the father Abraham. And on the Sabbath day, you circumcise a man.

Now he's referring back to this miracle on the Sabbath day. You see, I've done one miracle, one marvel among you and you're all upset. Because it was on the Sabbath day, he's referring back to the incident at the Pool of Bethesda, where they determined at that point we're going to kill him because he did it on the Sabbath day.

So he said, look, Moses gave the law of circumcision, not because it was really of Moses. It came from Abraham. But if the eighth day, the day that the child was to be circumcised happened to be the Sabbath day, you'll go ahead and circumcise him anyhow, even though it is the Sabbath.

So if a man on the Sabbath day receives circumcision, that the law of Moses should not be broken. Are you angry at me because I have made a man completely whole on the Sabbath day? You know, I've done a work of God on the Sabbath day. You do the work of God, a circumcision on the Sabbath day.

Why are you so upset with me for healing a man completely on the Sabbath day? Judge not according to appearance, but judge righteous judgment. That's good advice. How many times we are guilty of judging by appearance? Oh, I have made such horrible mistakes judging by appearances.

I have judged so wrongly judging by appearances. In fact, I've been very unrighteous in some of my judgment because I was judging by appearances. He said, don't judge by appearances, judge righteous judgment.

Then said some of them of Jerusalem, is not this he whom they are seeking to kill? But look, he's speaking boldly and they're saying nothing to him. Do the rulers indeed know that this is the very Messiah? Had they come to believe that he is the Messiah? How be it? We know this man, where he came from. But when the Messiah comes, no man knows where he is coming from.

That was a tradition that they had developed that the Messiah was just going to suddenly appear just out of nowhere, sort of like Superman, just, you know, out of the sky. It's a burning flame. No, it's the Messiah.

And suddenly he's standing here in your midst. And they feel that that idea probably developed from the 53rd chapter of Isaiah, which said, and who shall declare his generation? That is, who's going to tell of his parentage and all, you know, who can declare his generation? He just suddenly is here on the scene. No one knows where he came from, but here he is suddenly in the midst of us.

And so they said, you think that the rulers are coming to believe he's the Messiah? Hey, we know where this fellow came from. And when the Messiah comes, no one will know where he came from. Then cried Jesus in the temple as he taught, saying, you both know me and you know where I came from.

And I am not come of myself, but he that sent me is true whom you do not know. You may know me. You may know that I grew up in Nazareth, but you don't know the one who sent me.

But I know him, for I am from him and he hath sent me. Notice over and over Christ declaring the fact that he had been sent. He was here on a mission.

Then they sought to take him, but no man laid hands on him because his hour was not yet come. This is the first time we read this phrase, except that Jesus in the first part said to Mary, my hour is not yet come. But here is the beginning now of many, many times where we're going to be reading his hour was not yet come.

That is the hour of crucifixion, six months or so down the road. And many of the people believed on him and said when the Messiah comes, will he do more miracles than these, which this man has done? And the Pharisees heard that the people were murmuring such things concerning him. And the Pharisees and the chief priests sent officers to take him.

They felt that this is the time we've got to do something. And so they sent officers to arrest him. Then said Jesus unto them, yet a little while and I am with you.

And then I am going to him that sent me and you will seek me and shall not find me. And where I am, you cannot come. Now he's talking in all kinds of tenses.

Notice the different tenses that he's talking in here. And the reason why he's talking in so many tenses is because he transcended time. He was living always in the eternal.

And because of his transcendency of time, he talked in many tenses. And Jesus said, yet a little while and I am with you. And then I go to him that sent me, you will seek me and shall not find me.

You will seek me, shall not find me. And where I am, you cannot come. Speaking, you're going to seek me and find me.

But where I am, you cannot come. You see the different tenses here. For I am, I am in the eternal.

Then said the Jews among themselves, where's he going? That we can't find him. Is he going to go to the dispersed among the heathen and teach the heathen, the Gentiles? What kind of a saying is this that he said, you will seek me and shall not find me. And where I am, you cannot come.

What's he talking about? And then in the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried saying, if any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. The last day, the great day of the feast would have been the eighth day of the feast for the feast of the tabernacles lasted for eight days on the last day, the great day of the feast, no doubt there on the temple mount, thousands of people assembled for this feast. It was one of the three major feast days in the Jewish calendar when all the adult males were required to come and present themselves before God.

According to the historian Josephus, as many as two and a half million people would gather in Jerusalem for these feasts during the time of Christ. And so you can imagine the large multitude of people on the temple mount. Now, there was a significant symbolic action that took place each day of the feast as the priest would fill the water jugs at the pool of Siloam and singing the Hallel songs to send the steps from the pool to the temple mount area.

And before the people pour out these jugs of water, letting them splash upon the pavement to remind the people that when their fathers were dying in the wilderness, God preserved them by the miraculous giving of water out of the rock when it was smitten by Moses. And so water had a very important symbolic part to the feast of tabernacles. They realized that their fathers were about to be exterminated, but God preserved them and saved them by the water out of the rock.

And so Jesus, on this last day, the great day of the feast, cried, if any man thirst, let him come to me and drink. The thirst that Jesus is referring to is not a physical thirst or an emotional thirst, but that deep thirst in the spirit of man for God. Way down deep in every man, there is that thirst, that need for a meaningful relationship with God.

And I don't care who you are or what your background is or where you are. Every man deep down inside has the thirst for God. There are people who try to cover it.

They try to cover it with a facade. They try to put on a show, an act, a display. They try to put on a grandiose kind of a front, like I've got it made.

There's no problems. I don't need any help. I can do it on my own.

But down deep inside, there's a cry for a meaningful relationship with God. Classic example is that little gal at the well there in Samaria, who was so smart and chic and clever in her answers with Jesus, until finally he removed her mask and he said to her, Yes, you've told the truth when you say you don't have a husband, because in reality you have had five husbands, and the man you're presently living with, you never did bother to get married to. And he had ripped off her mask and she said, Sir, I perceive you're a prophet.

Our fathers say we're to worship God in these mountains, and you say in Jerusalem, but where can I find God? Hey, down deep in every heart, that's the question. Where can I find God? Man is thirsting in his spirit after God. Now, we try often to fill this thirst with physical things, but it never works.

The reason behind the pleasure mania in the United States today is that people are trying to somehow satisfy the deep spiritual thirst within. People try to satisfy it with emotional experiences, and really that's one of the big causes of the drug abuse. It's one of the causes of alcoholism.

It is interesting that Paul the Apostle associates alcoholism with being filled with the Spirit. He said, Be not drunk with wine wherein is excess, but be ye filled with the Spirit. And he associates the two.

Why? Because there is a definite relationship. What is a man searching after when he turns to the bottle and becomes an alcoholic? What is he looking for? He's looking for some kind of inner satisfaction, a peace, a peace of mind. He's looking for the capacity to cope.

What does a man find when he is filled with the Spirit? He finds a peace of mind. He finds the capacity to cope. He finds a fullness and a satisfaction.

And so it is only proper, and quite proper, that Paul would relate those two things which on the surface seem so diverse, but when you get underneath, you're dealing with the same issues. Man's thirst. One man though has a misdirected attempt to fill his thirst.

So Jesus said, If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink. And there you have the Gospel in its simplest terms. That's it.

That's what the Gospel is all about. For that man who is seeking in his spirit for a meaningful relationship with God, he can find it when he comes to Jesus Christ. You have a thirst deep inside.

You need God. I understand your need. Come unto Me and drink.

And then Jesus went on to explain, He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. Come to Me and drink, because I will fulfill that need in your life. I will fill that thirst.

Not only will I fill the thirst, but I will cause your life to become an overflowing cup. You know, there are times, and you know, they're getting more frequent. I don't know.

Maybe I'm getting old and senile, but they seem to be getting more frequent. Times when God begins to impress me with His love and with His goodness, and He begins to pour out on my heart and upon my life of His Spirit and of His love, until I say, oh God, I can't take it. It's too much, Lord.

You're too much, Lord. You better turn it off, God. I can't handle anymore, Lord.

I'm full, Lord. You know, and He just keeps pouring. Lord, I'm running over.

I can't handle it, Lord. And He just keeps pouring. Oh, man.

And I just get so caught away in the glory of God and His goodness and His love. And as far as I can hardly handle, well, I just can't handle. I just, you know, you just got to, you know, you get wiped out.

What a wonderful thing to be wiped out in the Spirit. Just that neat wipe out, spiritual wipe out. Oh, man, it's glorious.

As you just, you know, you're just, well, what can you say? Out of His innermost being, there will flow rivers of living water. Now, John adds his commentary. So, here we have John's commentary on the Gospel of John.

As he explains to us what Jesus was talking about. And his explanation comes after years of observation. He didn't know at the moment what Jesus was referring to.

But later on, when the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the church, and John began to have those overflowing experiences of God's power and love, then he understood and knew what Jesus was referring to. And because he wrote after the experience of the Holy Spirit, after Pentecost, he is now able to give the explanation of what Jesus was referring to. And he said, this spake he of the Spirit that was to be given to those that believed upon Him.

For the Spirit was not yet given. So, John makes reference then, or makes a commentary, that Jesus was actually referring to the Holy Spirit. And what was he declaring of it? That it would be like a river or a torrent of living water gushing forth out of a person's life.

Now, can you say that that is your relationship to the Holy Spirit? In the Scriptures, I see a threefold relationship of the believer to the Holy Spirit. And it is designated by three Greek prepositions. There is the

first preposition, para.

For Jesus said to His disciples, but I will pray the Father and He will give you another comforter, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him, but ye know Him, for He dwells with you, para, and He shall be in you. The Greek preposition, in. So, a twofold relationship there.

He is with you. Prior to our conversion, the Holy Spirit was with us. It was the Holy Spirit that convicted us of sin.

It was the Holy Spirit that pointed out that Jesus was the answer. And it was the Holy Spirit that drew us to Jesus, because no man can come except the Spirit draw him. And when the Holy Spirit had drawn me to Jesus, and I opened my heart and invited Jesus to come into my life, the Holy Spirit came in and began to reside in me, and the Holy Spirit began to indwell me.

So, He was with me prior to conversion, drawing me to Jesus, and then He came into my heart the moment I received Jesus. And He began His work of teaching me all things. He began His work of conforming me into the image of Christ.

He began that glorious work in my life. But yet, I read in the scripture of one further relationship that the believer can have to the Holy Spirit. And that is found in, first of all, the commandment of Jesus to His disciples, to tarry in Jerusalem, and to wait for the promise of the Father.

For Jesus said, you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you. And here is the Greek preposition epi, which means upon, over, or I like, overflows. When the Holy Spirit begins to overflow your life, the dynamic of the Spirit flowing forth, and this is what Jesus is referring to here, that third relationship.

When the Spirit has accomplished His work within me, and now that objective work of the Spirit, as the Spirit of God begins to flow forth from my life, and others around me then begin to receive of the benefit of that work that God has done in me. God has to work in me first. That's primary.

But God is never satisfied with just the work in me. God desires that my life be an instrument through which He might work through me, or a channel through which He might flow from me, His dynamic love and power to a needy world. So, this He was speaking of the Holy Spirit.

What? He will gush forth from your life like a torrent of living water. Years ago, I was working with a man who had been on a weekend retreat as a counselor to a youth group. And as we were working on Monday, he said, you know, I had some trouble this weekend at this camp where I was a counselor.

I said, what was the problem? He said, well, one of the speakers was talking to the kids there and saying, now while you're here in camp, you're getting marvelous experiences of drawing close to God and you're being filled with God's Holy Spirit. He said, but when you go back from this camp, he said, your mom is going to tell you to do something and you're going to say, oh, I don't want to do it. And he said, your attitude, because of that attitude, a little bit of the Spirit is going to leak out.

And then maybe you'll tell a lie or something. A little bit more of the Spirit is going to leak out. And after a while, all of the Spirit will have leaked out.

And then you're going to have to be refilled with the Spirit. He said, no, that just didn't sound right to me. He said, but I couldn't quite put my finger on what was wrong.

I said, well, I don't know of any place in the Scripture where it refers to the Spirit leaking out of your life. I said, but I know of a Scripture that declares it's going to flow forth or it's going to gush out of your life like a torrent of living water. That's the relationship I want.

I want my life to be just overflowing. I want God's Spirit to just come flowing forth from my life like a torrent of living water. Now, many of the people and the Spirit was not yet given because that Jesus was not yet glorified.

Jesus said, the Spirit can't come until I go. Now, when I go, I'm going to pray the Father and He's going to give you another comforter. And so, the Spirit was to come after Jesus was glorified and ascended to the Father.

And of course, when the day of Pentecost was fully come and Peter was explaining to the people what had happened, he said, this same Jesus has God raised and is now there in heaven with God and has sent forth this which you see. And so, the proof that Jesus came to the Father was the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the church. Many of the people, therefore, when they heard this saying, said of a truth, this is the prophet.

That is a reference to the prophecy in Deuteronomy where Moses said, and another prophet shall arise like unto myself and to him shall you give heed. Moses promises there were going to come another prophet. Now, the interesting thing today is that you talk to many of the Jews, most of the Orthodox, and they will say to you that they do not believe that the Messiah will be the Son of God, but the Messiah will be a man just like Moses was a man.

And they say that because Moses said, and there shall arise another like unto myself and to him shall you give heed. So, he's going to be just like Moses, they will tell you, who was a man that God anointed to lead them out of their captivity. So, God is going to anoint another man and we're looking for a man.

And what will be their sign? We're looking for a man who will rebuild the temple. They believe that when the Messiah comes, he's going to help them rebuild the temple and that's how they're going to recognize him, a man helping them to rebuild the temple. This is the prophet, they said.

That is the prophet that was referred to in Moses' prophecy. And others said, this is the Messiah. But some said, shall the Messiah come out of Galilee? Hath not the Scriptures said that the Messiah is coming of the seed of David and out of the town of Bethlehem where David was? Evidently, they didn't know that Jesus came from Bethlehem.

That Mary and Joseph had traveled there, of course, to be enrolled because he was at the house in the lineage of David. And of course, as Luke traces Mary's genealogy, we find that she also was of David. So, he was of David and born in Bethlehem.

But there was a division among the people because of him. And this is always true. Jesus is always dividing men.

He was deliberately dividing men. He would say radical things which would divide men. He said to Martha, I am the resurrection and the life.

He that believeth on me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And if you live and believe in me, you will never die. Do you believe this? You see, he said this radical thing.

And then he immediately challenged that. Do you believe this? Now, by asking the question, do you believe this? He was deliberately creating a division. And even tonight, people are divided.

Those who believe and those who do not believe. So, the division that he was creating then is the division that carries on to the present day. Those who believe, those who don't believe.

Those who have eternal life, those who do not have eternal life. Those who have a hope, those who have no hope. Jesus is always making the division.

Among men, and so they were divided because of him. And some of them would have taken him. That is to arrest him and all, but no man laid hands on him.

And so the officers of the chief priests and the Pharisees came back and they said unto them, why have you not brought him? And the officers answered, never a man has spoken like this man. Then they answered, the Pharisees said to them, are you also deceived? Have any of the rulers of the Pharisees believed on him? But these stupid people who don't know the law are cursed. Now, Nicodemus, the one who came to Jesus at night, being one of the Pharisees, said to them, does our law judge any man before it hears him and knows what he is doing? And they answered and said unto him, are you also of Galilee? In other words, are you in league with him? Search and look, for out of Galilee arises no prophet.

And so every man went to his own house. Now, Jesus went unto the Mount of Olives. And early in the morning, he came again to the temple.

Now, the feast is over, but Jesus is returning to the temple on the next day and all of the people came unto him and he sat down and taught them. I told you this morning that the rabbi always sat when he taught. And the scribes and the Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery.

And when they set her in the midst, they said unto him, master, this woman was taken in adultery in the very act. We caught her in the very act. Now, Moses in the law commanded us that such should be stoned.

But what do you say? And this they said, tempting him that they might have an occasion to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he did not even hear them. So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself and he said unto them, he that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.

And again, he stooped down and wrote on the ground. And they which heard it being convicted by their own conscience went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last. And Jesus was left alone and the woman standing there in the midst.

Now, I have a couple of, well, I have one problem with this and then a comment. The problem, where was the man? Because they caught them in the very act. And according to the law of Moses, they were both to be stoned.

Why did they only bring the woman if they were caught in the act? So there was an injustice at the very onset in their own judgments. They should have brought the man too. The question, what was Jesus

writing there in the sand? Now, of course, the scripture doesn't tell us.

So we can guess. My guess is that starting with the oldest of those Pharisees in the crowd who were really pushing him and challenging, our law says stoner, what do you say, you know? And here was old Levi, the old man pressing the point. And so Jesus probably wrote in the sand the name Levi.

And then last Tuesday at two in the afternoon, why were you and started, you know, writing out what Levi was doing the other day at two in the afternoon. And Levi said, I think my wife wanted me to pick up a loaf of bread. I better get home, you know, and he split.

It says they were one by one convicted. So Levi's gone. So he writes Simon.

And he begins to write one of Simon's sins of the previous day or so. Simon gets all embarrassed and flustered and he takes off. And so down the line from the oldest to the youngest, Jesus began to write their names and write the things that they've been doing.

Because they were all of them convicted one by one in their own conscience. And they went out one by one, beginning from the eldest, even to the youngest. Until there was no one left but the woman.

And when Jesus had stood up again, he just put his head down and just started writing, you know. Finally, when he stood up again, he saw no one but the woman. He said unto her, Woman, what happened to your accusers? Hasn't any man condemned you? And she said, no man, Lord.

And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more. That's an important thing.

Go, but don't forget the last. And sin no more. It's not just a license.

Jesus said, God did not send me into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through me might be saved. And he that believeth is not condemned. So here's a woman caught in the act of a capital sin, according to the Mosaic law.

But Jesus is saying to her, I don't condemn you. Because he didn't come to condemn, he came to save. And there he demonstrated his glorious ministry, seeking and saving that which was lost.

She didn't need to be condemned. She needed to be saved. We don't need to be condemned.

We need to be saved. Now, as we move on in Romans 8 on Thursday nights, we're soon going to be getting to that interesting rhetorical question. Who is he that condemneth? It is true that Christians live under much condemnation.

But who is he that condemns? If you as a child of God are living under condemnation, is it because Jesus is condemning you? God help us to be freed from this stereotype picture of God that we have of just waiting for us to do something wrong so he can rub us out. We so often sort of transpose the image of Santa Claus over to God, as though God is a Santa Claus and all of our prayers are just to get the good gifts. We're not going to get the good gifts from him.

Tell me what you want today. What do you want for Christmas, little boy? And so prayer is just to get all the things from God that we want. But in carrying that image over, we also see him making out a list and checking it twice, going to find out who's naughty and nice.

And because we know that we've been naughty and we feel guilty over our sins, we feel that God is condemning us. Who is he that condemns? Paul does not declare who condemns. He only declares negatively who isn't condemning.

He said, it is Christ who has died, yea rather is risen again, and is even at the right hand of the Father making intercession for us. He's not condemning us. He's interceding for us.

And Jesus did not condemn the sinner. To this woman, He said, neither do I condemn you. Just go and sin no more.

Then speak Jesus again unto them saying, I am the light of the world, and he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. He said, I am the bread of life. Now he is declaring, I am the light of the world.

He is making radical claims. If a man follows me, he will not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. And the Pharisees therefore said unto him, you are bearing record of yourself, and so your record is not true.

Jesus answered and said unto them, though I bear record of myself, yet my record is true, for I know from whence I came and where I am going, but you cannot tell from whence I have come or where I am going. You judge after the flesh, and I judge no man. And yet if I judge, my judgment is true, for I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me.

And again, pressing the claim, the Father sent me. It is also written in your law that the testimony of two men is true. I am one that bears witness of myself, and the Father that sent me bears witness of me.

Then they said unto him, where is your father? And Jesus answered, you neither know me nor my father, for if you had known me, you would have known my father also. And these words speak Jesus in the treasury as He taught in the temple. And no man laid hands on Him, for His hour was not yet come.

Then said Jesus again unto them, I go my way, and you will seek Me, and you will die in your sins, for where I go, you cannot come. Then the Jews said, is He going to kill Himself? Because He says, where I go, you cannot come? And He said unto them, you are from beneath, and I am from above. You are of this world, I am not of this world.

I said therefore unto you, that you will die in your sins, for if you believe not that I am, ye shall die in your sins. Notice again what heavy, radical statements Jesus is making. He's laying things now straight on the line.

He's declaring very plainly to them the truth. And what is the truth? If you don't believe in Him, you're going to die in your sins. For God has made provision for the forgiveness of our sins, but that provision is believing in Jesus Christ.

And if you don't believe in Him, then there is no provision and you will die in your sins, and if you die in your sins, you are lost. And so Jesus is just squaring off with these fellows now. He's saying, you're from beneath, I'm from above.

Then they said unto Him, who are you? And Jesus said unto them, the very same one that I told you from the beginning. And I have many things to say and to judge of you, but He that sent me is true. And I speak

to the world those things which I have heard of Him.

And they understood not that He was speaking to them of the Father. And then said Jesus unto them, when you have lifted up the Son, and of course, that term lifted up is the term that refers to the cross. So He is actually saying, when you have lifted me up on the cross or when you have crucified the Son of Man, then shall ye know that I am, and that I do nothing of myself, but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things.

And He that sent me is with me, and the Father has not left me alone, for I do always those things that please Him. What a remarkable statement to be able to make. Oh, I wish that I could make that statement.

After just one day, I wish I could make that statement. I do always those things that please Him. Now, the Father testified that.

He said, this is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. Jesus said, there is no unrighteousness in me. I do always those things that please Him.

And in a little bit, He's going to say, which of you can convince me of sin or show me a sin that I have done? I do always those things that please Him. Now, as He spoke these words, many believed on Him. And then Jesus said to those Jews which believed on Him, if you continue in my word, then you are my disciples indeed.

Now, you believe on me, now just continue in my word. And if you do, then you are really my disciples. And you will know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

And so they answered Him and they said, we are Abraham's seed. We were never in bondage to any man. Right at the present moment, they were in bondage to Rome, but they didn't recognize that, and that was one of their problems.

They continually rebelled against the Roman authority. And finally, in 70 AD, the nation was completely wiped out because of this attitude, we are in bondage to no man. And that attitude brought the destruction of the nation in the revolt of 70 AD when the Romans sent Titus with his legions, and they came and just wiped out the nation itself.

But it's interesting, the spirit of these people. We are Abraham's seed, we're in bondage to no man. Jesus said, you know, you shall know the truth, the truth shall make you free.

How do you say you will be made free? Jesus answered them, verily, verily, I say unto you, whosoever commits sin is a servant of sin. You say you're free, but if you commit sin, you're a servant of sin. The Bible tells us that whomsoever we yield ourselves, servants to obey, his servants we become, whether of sin unto unrighteousness or of obedience unto eternal life.

Now, it is interesting how quickly a person can become a slave of sin. It's interesting how quickly sin can get a hold upon a person's life and begin to control them. If you yield yourself, your body, to sin, it can get such a hold upon you that you become its slave.

And we have seen people enslaved by sin. And Jesus is here declaring that if you commit sin, you become the servant of sin. You say you are free? Oh, no, you're not.

You're the servants of sin. And the servant abides not in the house forever, but the Son abides ever. And if the Son therefore shall make you free, you shall be free indeed.

How I love my freedom in Jesus Christ. How I love my liberty that I have in Him. In fact, I love it so much that I carefully guard it.

Now, one problem that a lot of people have is that they don't appreciate their freedom and they don't guard it. The freedom that I enjoy is the freedom not to. Not necessarily the freedom to.

I have the freedom to, but I enjoy the freedom not to. Because many times if I exercise the freedom to, then I no longer have the freedom not to. So, it's important how you exercise your freedom.

Thank God I don't have to drink. Thank God I don't have to do these things. Some people are compelled.

Some people have no control. Some people are slaves. I'm free.

I don't have to. I have the freedom not to. Because I've been set free by the Son.

And I'll tell you, Paul the Apostle spoke about guarding that freedom. He said, all things are lawful for me. Man, I am free.

But, he said, I will not be brought under the power of any. If I exercise my freedom in an activity that in itself can bring me under its influence or power, I'm sacrificing my freedom and I'm no longer free. I'm now under the influence or the power of this habit or whatever it is that I have done.

I become controlled by it. I'm now the servant or the slave of sin. But when the Son sets you free, you're free indeed.

And thank God He can set you free from any binding power of sin that you might have in your life. He can set you free from drug addiction. He can set you free from alcoholism.

He can set you free from any power of sin that might be holding you tonight. You need not be a servant of sin because Jesus Christ can set you free tonight from whatever it is that is binding your life and holding you under its influence and power. Whom the Son sets free is free indeed.

Oh, how I revel and enjoy my freedom. I know that you are Abraham's seed. Now, they said here earlier, we are Abraham's seed.

We're not in bondage to anybody. Jesus said, I know you're Abraham's seed, but you seek to kill me because my word has no place in you. And I speak that which I have seen with my father, and you do that which you have seen with your father.

And they answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. And Jesus said, oh no, how is it they are Abraham's seed and Abraham's not their father? Because Jesus is talking both about the physical and the spiritual. Being of the seed of Abraham does not make you a child of Abraham.

For Abraham was the father of those who believed. He was actually the progenitor of many nations. From Abraham came forth the Ishmaelites.

They were Abraham's seed, but they weren't Abraham's children by promise. So, he's talking about the spiritual children and the physical seed of Abraham. And there's a vast difference.

And even to these Jews, he's acknowledging, yes, you're of Abraham's seed, but he's not really your father. You see, spiritually, you're not a child of Abraham because you don't believe. And he was making that distinction.

So, I know that you're Abraham's seed. You've descended from him, but you seek to kill me because my word has no place in you. And I speak that which I have seen and all.

They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. And Jesus said unto them, if you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham. But now you seek to kill me, a man that has told you the truth which I have heard of God.

And this did not Abraham. Abraham didn't try and kill me. He believed God's works.

And that's what God accounted to him for righteousness. I'm telling you the word of God and you're trying to kill me. You're not doing Abraham's work when you're trying to kill me.

You do the deeds of your father. And then they said unto him, we're not born of fornication. This could be a reference to the virgin birth.

They could be here declaring your mother bore you out of wedlock. We're not born of fornication. And it could be that the story of Mary had gotten around that Joseph really wasn't the father of Jesus.

And they did not believe that he was conceived of the Holy Spirit. And so they are accusing him of being born out of wedlock. Now, the Bible asserts that Mary was a virgin and that the birth of Christ was a divine miracle because the power of the highest came upon her and Jesus was the Son of God born through the work and the agency of the Holy Spirit impregnating Mary.

Here it seems to be a low blow at Jesus challenging the virgin birth. There is an interesting conclusion that can be drawn from this. In the accounts in the Scripture, the accounts of Mary, the mother of Jesus, we do find that she is one of the most remarkable women who ever lived.

Surely the most blessed woman who ever. When she visited her cousin Elizabeth there in the hill country of Judea, she said, blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And from henceforth, all generations shall call you blessed.

Why? Because God gave to her the highest honor and privilege that any woman could ever have. God chose her as the instrument to bring his son into the world. What an honor.

But God in making that choice made the choice wisely and no doubt chose a young girl of highest character and virtue. And this is demonstrated in what is called the Magnificat of Mary in Luke's Gospel chapter two where in chapter one there where we hear her declaring, my soul doth magnify the Lord and my spirit doth rejoice for he hath regarded the lowest state of his handmaid and goes on and just in glorious, rapturous praises unto God expressing a depth of character and soul that is just absolutely marvelous. And all the way through the accounts where Mary is brought into the picture, it's always in a very admirable way.

Except here. We're not born of fornication. Your mother bore you out of wedlock.

Now, being this admirable character that Mary was and knowing the psychology of a mother's love for her child, there's nothing it seems in the world that quite excels that mother's love for a child. That natural

God-given love. When Jesus was being tried to be crucified, Mary could have put an end to the whole procedure.

Very quickly, very simply. When she saw that things were going against her son, that he was being condemned to be crucified, she could have stepped before Pilate and said, hold on, wait a minute. I'll name the man who did it.

And she could have named the father of Jesus had there been an earthly father. And I'm sure had there been, she would have, knowing a mother's love. But she couldn't.

She was helpless. And she had to see him die because there was no way that she could free him by naming an earthly father because he was born of God. And that is one of the powerful arguments for the virgin birth of Jesus.

It's one of the psychological arguments of the virgin birth. The fact that Mary could not free him from condemnation by naming an earthly father because he had no earthly father. He was born of God.

But here it seems that they're sort of casting this aspersion at him. We're not born of fornication. We have one father, even God.

And Jesus said unto them, if God were your father, he would love me. For I proceeded forth and came from God. Neither came I of myself, but he sent me.

Now he'd been telling, you know, he who has sent me, he who has sent me. And now he's telling them plainly who it was that sent him. If God were your father, you would love me.

For I proceeded forth and came from God. A plain declaration of Jesus that he proceeded forth and came from God. There are those that say, well, Jesus never claimed to be the Son of God.

Wait a minute. Right here he is proclaiming and declaring plainly to them, I proceeded forth and came from God. Neither came I of myself.

I didn't come on my own. He sent me. And why do you not understand my speech? Even because you cannot hear my word.

For ye are of your father the devil. They said, we have Abraham for our father. And then they said, we have one father, even God.

And Jesus said, oh no. God is not your father. But ye are of your father the devil.

And the desires of your father you will do. Satan's desire to destroy Jesus. You're going to do it.

He was a murderer from the beginning. You're going to murder me. He abode not in the truth because there is no truth in him.

And when he speaks a lie, he's only speaking of his own nature. For he is a liar and the father of it. And because I tell you the truth, you do not believe me.

Which of you can convince me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do you not believe me? He that is of God hears God's words. Ye therefore hear them not because you are not of God. Now, this is a very heavy thing.

Because as you are here tonight, are you hearing God's word? Or is this just all, you know, gobbledygook? You know, are you saying, oh, well, you know, get over with it, will you, man? I want to go home, you know. And, you know, are you really... Does God's word speak to your heart? Do you receive it? Does it strike your heart? Is it warming your heart? Is it ministering and feeding you? Or is it just something that's, you know, you just sort of, you know, shoving aside? You can very quickly tell who your father is. He that is of God hears God's words.

You therefore hear them not because you are not of God. Then answered the Jews and said unto him, Did we not well say that you're a Samaritan and you have a devil? And Jesus answered, I don't have a devil, but I honor my father and you dishonor me. And I seek not my own glory.

There is one who seeks and judges. Verily, verily, I say unto you, if a man keeps my sayings, he shall never see death. Oh, Jesus is not going to let them off the hook.

He's just going to put the knife in deeper. I mean, he's ready. You know, he's ready for a controversy.

You guys want to hear it? All right, go. Let's go for it, you know. And now this radical statement.

If a man keeps my saying, he shall never see death. Then the Jews said unto him, Now we know that you have a devil. For Abraham is dead and the prophets.

And you say, if a man keeps my saying, he shall never taste of death. Jesus often was misunderstood because Jesus spoke of spiritual things and these people could only think in terms of material things. And there is a biblical definition of death and a material definition of death.

And from a human material definition, death is the separation of a man's consciousness from his body. If they put the EKG on a person and they get a flat reading, there's no motion at all. And 24 hours later, they again put the EKG on and there is still a flat reading.

If they then, which they often do, pull the plug and watch the EKG and they still have no activities. If there still remains a flat movement, the person is clinically dead. It means that there is no activity in the brain at all.

The brain or the consciousness of the person has departed. There's no brain activity. He is dead.

His consciousness is now separated or has left his body. Now, a spiritual definition of death is the separation of your consciousness from God. So that the Bible says, if a person is living only for pleasure, they're dead while they're still living.

You see, if pleasure is your God, if pleasure is your chief goal, if you're living simply for pleasure, then your consciousness is separated from God. Thus, you are dead. Even though you may still be alive from a physical standpoint, yet you're dead because your consciousness is separated from God.

God is not in your conscience, the Bible says. So, Jesus making reference to that spiritual definition. If a man keeps my sayings, he will never see death.

I will never consciously be separated from God. Hey, my consciousness may leave this old body, but I will not be dead. I'll be more conscious of God than ever because I'll be right in the presence of God.

Very much alive. He that keeps my saying will never see death. I believe that.

I believe that completely. I believe that one day my consciousness will leave this body and people will read in the paper, Chuck Smith died. That's poor reporting.

Inaccurate, to say the least. To accurately record, they must write, Chuck Smith moved out of a decrepit, worn out tent into a beautiful new mansion. I won't be dead.

I'll be very much alive there in the presence of God in his eternal kingdom. For we know that when this earthly tabernacle is dissolved, we have a building of God not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. So then we who are in these bodies do often groan, earnestly desiring to move out, not to be an unembodied spirit, but that I might move into that new body which is in heaven.

For I know that as long as I'm still living in this body, I'm absent from the Lord. So I would rather be absent from this body and to be present with the Lord. So one day I'm going to move out of the tent into the house.

Not dead, just moved. The Jews said unto him, now we know that you have a devil for Abraham is dead and the prophets. And you say, if a man keeps my saying, he shall never taste of death.

Now they made a wrong assumption of Abraham. You remember Jesus when he was talking to the Sadducees. And he asked them the question, you know, they were the ones that didn't believe in resurrection or spirits or angels.

Jesus said, how come when God spoke to Moses at the burning bush? He said, I am the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob. He's not the God of the dead, but of the living. They made a wrong assumption when they said Abraham was dead.

Abraham was very much alive at that point. In fact, he was comforting all of those who were awaiting the Messiah. Look, the 16th chapter.

And the poor man was taken by the angel into Abraham's bosom where he was comforting those who were waiting. So are you greater than our father Abraham, which is dead and the prophets which are dead? Who do you make yourself? And Jesus answered, if I honored myself, my honor is nothing. It is my father that honors me of whom you say that he is your God.

Yet you have not known him, but I know him. And if I should say I don't know him, I would be a liar just like you. But I know him and I keep his sayings.

You see, Jesus is not really mincing words with these guys now. I mean, he's laying it on them. And then he said, your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day and he saw it and was glad.

And the Jews said unto him, you're not even 50 years old yet and have you seen Abraham? And Jesus said unto them, verily, verily, I say unto you, before Abraham was, I am. This is, this is it. This is his open plain declaration of his divinity.

Using now that name of the eternal God. When Moses said, whom shall I say? He sent me, say I am that I am hath sent thee. The name that expresses the eternal nature of God.

You're not 50 years old. You mean that Abraham saw you? And Jesus said, before Abraham was, I am. Now, they understood what he said because they took up stones to throw at him.

But Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple going through the midst of them and so he passed by. Now, when did Abraham see him? Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day and he saw it and was glad. When did Abraham see him? It is quite possible that this is a reference to Melchizedek.

In the Old Testament. For when Abraham came back from the victory over the five kings, there came out the king of Salem, the king of peace, and met him and gave him bread and wine or communion. And Abraham gave tithe of all that he had to him or gave him a tenth of all of the spoils.

Now, this priest of the Old Testament, Melchizedek was called the priest of the Most High God. Honored by Abraham. By Abraham giving of his substance to him, a tithe of all that he had.

And it is quite possible that Melchizedek was what is known as a theophany, the appearance of God in the Old Testament in the form of Jesus Christ. Before Abraham was, I am. And that Abraham rejoiced to see my day and he saw it.

There is other evidence that shows that Melchizedek could very well have been none other than Jesus Christ. It is said there was no record of his genealogies. He did not come from the Levitical priesthood because Levi wasn't even born.

Levi was a descendant of Abraham from which the family of the priest came. So, it is quite possible that Melchizedek was actually an appearance of Jesus to Abraham in the Old Testament. There is one other possibility and that is when the angel of the Lord was on his way to destroy the city of Sodom.

As you read the text carefully, Abraham was talking with Jehovah or Jesus Christ as he was interceding for the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. What if there are 50 righteous people? Will you destroy the righteous with the wicked? Shouldn't the Lord be fair? And as you read that, you'll find that Abraham is addressing Jehovah and Jehovah is answering Abraham. So, it is possible that that is where Abraham saw Jesus and rejoiced to see his day.

But Jesus existed from the beginning and was manifested during the Old Testament period. So, just an interesting sidelight. Next week, chapters 9 and 10.

May you be blessed of the Lord as you go your way. Strengthened by the power of the Holy Spirit working in your life. Filled to overflowing with God's love as you go out as a light shining in the darkness to bring that light to those who sit in darkness that they may have hope in a day of great darkness.

In Jesus' name.

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