

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

Jesus: The Light of the World John 8:37-49 Part 5

There is an incredible difference between professing Christians and the way they respond to the Scriptures.

On the one hand, there is a group of professing believers who see the Scriptures as their very spiritual life-blood. They take the Scriptures very seriously and are seeking by the grace of God to apply each and every truth they uncover to their lives.

But there is another group of professing believers who view the Scriptures as rather ho-hum. They can either take them or leave them. They go long periods of time without reading them, and even when they do, the Scriptures have very little or no impact upon them. They profess to be Christians, but there is not a whole lot in their lives that set them apart from professed unbelievers.

How can this be explained? This question leads us back into the passage that we will be studying this weekend.

We are presently examining John 8:12-59, which is a continuing record of the events associated with the last day of the feast of booths.

How did this passage begin? The passage began with Christ claiming He was the light of the world (John 8:12). Let me read for you **John 8:12. "Again therefore Jesus spoke to them, saying, 'I am the light of the world.'** " How did the Jewish people respond to this claim? More specifically, how did the Pharisees, the religious leaders of the Jews, respond to this claim? The initial response of the Pharisees to the claim of Christ was one of unbelief (John 8:13-20).

They told Him because He bore witness of Himself that His witness was not true, and then when Christ told them that His Father, referring to His heavenly Father, also bore witness of Him, they disdainfully challenged Him to produce His Father. The Pharisees were not a very receptive audience. So what happens next?

Jesus, in John 8:21-29, warned the Pharisees that if they did not respond positively to His claim in the here and now, they would be forever separated from Him in the hereafter.

So, how did these Pharisees and others listening to Christ respond to all that He has said, including this warning? Many responded to all of what Christ said, including His warning, by making professions of faith (John 8:30). Let me read for you **John 8:30. "As He spoke these things, many came to believe in Him."**

How did Jesus respond to these many professions of faith? Jesus responded to these many so-called professions of faith by exposing them as superficial (John 8:31-59). He does this incrementally starting in **John 8:31** and finally concluding in **John 8:59**. So, what was His first step in the process?

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The first step in exposing their professions as superficial was to explain to them what characterizes the life of someone who has made a genuine profession of faith (John 8:31-36). And how did He describe that person? He described that person in **John 8:31-32**.

Let me read these verses for you. "**Jesus therefore was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, 'If you abide in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; (32) and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.'**" Did they receive this instruction well? And the answer of course is "no." The Jews took exception with Christ's implication that the physical seed of Abraham needed to be set free. And this led Christ to expand on the subject of spiritual slavery in **John 8:33-36**. This further expansion did not set well with these so-called disciples of Christ. And this poor response led Jesus to take a second step in exposing the superficiality of their professions.

And this is where we will pick up our study this morning. My hope for our study this morning is that we might have the opportunity to look at our profession of faith in a very critical manner. My hope for this message this morning is that it will give us the opportunity to test our profession of faith and see if it is in fact genuine. If we conclude that our profession of faith is in fact genuine let us rejoice. If we have reason to question that it is not genuine then let us ask God to give us the grace to exercise genuine, living and saving faith before it is too late. So what is the second step?

The second step in exposing their professions as superficial was for Christ to show them how their own lives *failed* to demonstrate what was characteristic of a true disciple (John 8:37-49). What characterizes the life of a true disciple? True disciples abide in the word of Christ. It is what molds them and shapes them. The words of Christ are not dead to them but powerfully alive in them to accomplish the purposes of God in and through their lives. Unfortunately, this was not true in respect to these many Jews who had made these so-called professions of faith. Rather than embracing Christ's words about the offspring of Abraham needing to be set free, they became upset with Christ. How upset did they become?

Let me read for you **John 8:37**. "**I know that you are Abraham's offspring; yet you seek to kill Me.**" How upset were these Jews with Christ? These Jews were so upset with Christ that they were entertaining murderous thoughts toward Him.

Is this the response that you would expect from a true disciple? Absolutely not! We should expect that Christ's word, in the heart of a true disciple, would produce obedience and not murderous thoughts, since a true disciple will *abide* in His word.

We might think at this point that He has said all that needs to be said, but it is apparent from our text that Jesus would not agree with us. Jesus, in John 8:38-47, will now explain to these Jews, who had made these so-called professions of faith, *where* their murderous thoughts came from.

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

Jesus has now not only simply accused them of having murderous thoughts toward Him in **John 8:37**, He now links those murderous thoughts to their father in **John 8:38**. How will they respond to what Christ has said?

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It would seem to me that if they were truly innocent of what Christ charged them with, they first of all would have denied having any murderous thoughts concerning Christ. Perhaps saying, "How could you say anything like this? Haven't we acknowledged that you are the Christ?" But they don't deny it, which I would think would have to be somewhat incriminating. Rather, they are offended that Jesus would associate their murderous thoughts with Abraham since he was the one they had earlier indicated to Jesus was their father.

Let me read for you **John 8:39**. "**They answered and said to Him, 'Abraham is our father.'**" They in effect are saying, "You are accusing us of having murderous thoughts toward you and you have told us that those murderous thoughts have come from our father, this ticks us off! It ticks us off because you are saying that Abraham is a co-conspirator with us in our murderous intentions."

How will Jesus now respond to their offense? Let us continue to read. "**Jesus said to them, 'If you are Abraham's children, do the deeds of Abraham.'**"

When Jesus tells these Jews "If you are Abraham's children do the deeds of Abraham," He is challenging them to take a spiritual *paternity* test (John 8:39).

If their conduct proved to be similar to the conduct of Abraham, then the result of this spiritual paternity test would confirm that Abraham was indeed their father, not genetically but spiritually. But if their conduct proved not to be similar, then it would confirm that Abraham was not their spiritual father. So what were the deeds of Abraham?

The deeds of Abraham are spelled out for Isaac in **Genesis 26:5**. In this verse God is explaining to Isaac why he was going to be the recipient of all the blessings that He had spelled out in **Genesis 26:1-4**. And what was God's explanation? Let me now read for you **Genesis 26:5**. "**Because Abraham obeyed Me and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes and My laws.**" These are the deeds of Abraham. The deeds of Abraham were all about obeying God's Word.

So how will the Jews measure up to this standard? Poorly! Had they obeyed God? Had they obeyed God's word? No! And Christ will now point out that fact to them.

Let me read for you **John 8:40**. "**But as it is, you are seeking to kill Me, a man who has told you the truth, which I heard from God; this Abraham did not do.**" Were the Jews doing the deeds of Abraham? Were the Jews obeying God? Or in other words, were they keeping His charge, His commandments, His statutes and His Laws as Abraham had done? Absolutely not! Rather than doing the deeds of Abraham, rather than obeying God, they were seeking to kill the very person God had sent to tell them the truth. And who was that person? Jesus!

Jesus, in John 8:40, in the most emphatic terms tells these Jews, based on the paternity test found in John 8:39, that Abraham was *not* their spiritual father.

Though the paternity test clearly indicated that Abraham was not their spiritual father, it did however point to another. What does Jesus tell the Jews in **John 8:41**? "**You are doing the deeds of your father.**"

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The Jews interpreted these words of Christ as a personal affront. When Christ, based on this paternity test, rejected their claim that Abraham was their spiritual father, the Jews felt He was calling them spiritually illegitimate (John 8:41). This explains their response to Christ's words at the end of **John 8:41** when **"They said to Him, 'We were not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God.'"**

In this response, they not only denied Christ's personal affront that they were spiritually illegitimate with the words **"We were not born of fornication,"** they also chose to argue their spiritual legitimacy based on a whole new line of argumentation when they said, **"We have one Father, even God."**

In this statement, the Jews, in speaking to Christ, abandoned their attempt to establish their spiritual legitimacy through Abraham and appealed rather to their relationship with God Himself. In their minds they in effect were saying to Jesus, had not the Lord Himself declared that Israel was His firstborn son according to **Exodus 4:22**? And had not the Lord Himself declared that He was Israel's father according to **Jeremiah 31:9**?

Jesus, in John 8:42-47, did not deny the truth that Israel had a special relationship with His father, but He did deny that these Jewish opponents were connected to God on a personal level. Jesus gave three different reasons to support this particular viewpoint.

First of all, Jesus knew that these Jews were not personally connected to God because they had failed to love the one who had been with God and who had been sent by God (John 8:42). Let me read for you **John 8:42. "Jesus said to them, 'If God were your Father, you would love Me; for I proceeded forth and have come from God, for I have not even come on my own initiative, but He sent Me.'"**

If a person claims to have a relationship with God then they must be able to demonstrate by their deeds that they love Christ. And it was obvious to Christ in His interaction with these so-called disciples that they in fact did not love Him. But how did He know that they did not love Him? This brings us to the second reason why Jesus denied that they were not personally connected to God.

Jesus knew that these Jews were not personally connected to God because of the way they responded to His Word (John 8:43). Let me read for you **John 8:43. "Why do you not understand what I am saying? It is because you cannot hear my Word."**

When Jesus said that they could not hear His word, He is not saying that they cannot hear His word in a physical sense. Certainly they could hear His words with their ears, but they could not hear His words in respect to the deepest recesses of their hearts. But how can someone know if Christ's words have been heard and have reached the deepest recesses of their heart? This leads us to a third reason why Jesus denied that these Jews were not personally connected to God. What is that third reason?

Jesus knew that these Jews were not personally connected to God because in spite of the truth being shared, they continued to desire the same things as their father the devil (John 8:44-45).

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Let me read for you **John 8:44-45**. **"You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from His own nature; for he is a liar, and the father of lies. (45) But because I speak the truth, you do not believe Me."**

Jesus had already established, because of their murderous intent to kill Him, that their father was someone other than Abraham. But now Jesus identifies their actual father. And who is their actual father? The Jews actual father was not God but the devil. What did Jesus say to them? **"You are of your father the devil."**

This declaration by Christ was like Him dropping a bomb. Physically these Jews, to be sure, were children of Abraham; but spiritually and morally – and that was the issue – they were the children of the devil.

Jesus not only makes this charge but He will go on to prove it. Let us now continue to read **John 8:44**. **"You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father."**

The similarity of the Jews' inner passions and desires with the inner passions and desires of the devil established their spiritual *descent* (John 8:44). These Jews constantly desired to carry out the wishes, the desires, and the yearnings of the devil Himself; therefore he must be their father. So what are those wishes, desires, and yearnings? There are two specific desires that Christ identifies.

The first desire that these Jews shared in common with the devil was *murder*. Let us continue to read. **"You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning."** What does Jesus mean when He says that the devil was a murderer from the beginning? From the very beginning of history the devil had murder in his heart, and he is the one actually responsible for plunging the human race into physical, spiritual and eternal death (Romans 5:12, Hebrews 2:14; I John 3:8).

This is the first desire that these Jews share in common with the devil is murder. But there is still another desire.

The second desire that these Jews shared in common with the devil was their love of *falsehood*. Does Satan love falsehood? Of course he loves falsehood? What does **John 8:44** tell us? It tells us that he does not stand in the truth. Why? The verse goes on to say, **"Because there is no truth in him."** He loves falsehood because that is all he knows. In fact, he is identified as the wellspring of everything that is false. Let us continue to read the verse. **"Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from His own nature; for he is a liar."** And then what does He say? **"And the father of lies."** Everything that is false in this world originates with the devil.

Those who do not love Christ, who are unable to hear His word and take it into the deepest recesses of their hearts, in effect, whether they acknowledge it or not, share the same kind of enthusiasm for that which is false.

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This enthusiastic embrace of that which is false is manifested when they are totally unable to receive that which is true about Christ. Or in other words, the children of the devil will be so characterized by lies that they will not be able to accept the truth because it is the *truth* (John 8:45).

Jesus now asks them a rhetorical question at the beginning of **John 8:46**. "**Which one of you convicts Me of sin?**" We must be careful not to misunderstand this question. Jesus, in John 8:46, did not ask whether anyone thought He was guilty of sin, rather He asked could anyone *prove* Him guilty of sin. And does anyone at this point step forward in order to accuse Him? No!

Jesus therefore asked another question. Let us continue to read the verse. "**If I speak truth, why do you not believe Me?** And what is the answer to that question?"

He supplies the answer to that question in **John 8:47**. "**He who is of God hears the words of God; for this reason you do not hear them, because you are not of God.**"

CONCLUSION

Jesus, in **John 8:31-36**, had made it very clear to these many Jews who had made professions of faith that true disciples abide in the word of Christ. Jesus, in **John 8:37-47**, has now made it very clear to these who had made professions of faith that this characteristic is not true of them.

What is their problem? They are of their father the devil and want to do the desires of their father. This not only means that they are perfectly capable of harboring murderous thoughts about Christ, but more importantly they have absolutely, in a real and true sense, no appetite for the truth.

They may find the truth intriguing perhaps at times even interesting. They may even, like these Pharisees, make a superficial profession of faith. But the bottom line is this: He who is of God *hears* the words of God.