



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



# The Holy Gospel According to St. John

## Chapter 8

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# Introduction

- The Lord Jesus Christ is the Source of Light and Truth

## Chapter Outline:

- The Adulterous Woman 8:1-11
- The Messiah: The Light of the World 8:12
- Jesus Defends His Self-Witness 8:13-20
- Jesus Predicts His Departure 8:21-30
- The Truth Shall Make You Free 8:31-36
- Abraham's Seed and Satan's 8:37-47
- Before Abraham Was, I AM 8:48-59

# The Adulterous Woman

## 8:1-11



- The last verse of chapter 7 and the eleven verses that follow in this chapter are not found in the greater part of our present Greek copies
- But they are in some manuscripts
- However, three eminent 4<sup>th</sup> century Church Fathers, St. Jerome, St. Ambrose and St. Augustine, all testify to its authenticity
- St. Jerome says, they were found in many both Latin and Greek copies

# The Adulterous Woman

## 8:1-11



- St. Ambrose says this passage, of the woman taken in adultery, was always famous in the Church
- St. Augustine maintains that this story was always part of the Gospel according to St. John but that it was excluded from many copies because Church authorities feared it would be misinterpreted to suggest that Jesus condoned adultery
- Many ancient manuscripts that do not contain this story have a blank space between the end of what we designate as John 8:2 and the beginning of the Light of the World discourse 8:12

# The Adulterous Woman

## 8:1-11



- The people had gone home (7:53), but Jesus went to the Mount of Olives on the east side of Jerusalem
- This is where He often went in the evenings and then returned in the morning
- It was here He went to pray on the night before His crucifixion
- Early the next morning He returned to the temple and taught the People
- This was also customary for Him

# The Adulterous Woman

## 8:1-11



- The scribes and Pharisees, as they often did, found a way to try to test or trap Jesus and thereby to discredit Him (verse 6)
- We need to keep in mind that the Pharisees believed that they followed the Law so carefully that they did not sin, Philippians, 3:5-6
- Also keep in mind that only the Roman Empire had the power over life and death in Judea, 18:31-32
- They brought a woman to Jesus in the midst of the multitude and said she had been caught in the very act of adultery

# The Adulterous Woman

## 8:1-11



- They pointed out that, according to the Law of Moses she was to be stoned to death
- They asked Him what He said about it
- The teaching of the law is found in Leviticus 20:10; Deuteronomy 22:22-24
- If Jesus does not condemn this woman to death under Mosaic Law the Pharisees will condemn Jesus to the people as a false Messiah who does not support Mosaic Law
- He had accused them of not keeping the Law, John 7:19

# The Adulterous Woman

## 8:1-11



- Now they will show that He does not keep the Law
- However, if He condemns her to death they can report Him into the Roman authorities as a traitor to Rome because He fostered rebellion by taking Roman powers unto Himself
- Only Rome had the power over life and death in this Roman province
- This their craft and wickedness Jesus fully knew
- Note that these passages teach both the adulterer and the adulteress should be put to death



# The Adulterous Woman

## 8:1-11



- If the woman was taken in the very act, then the man should have been caught too
- Where was he?
- If the Jews were really so concerned about following Moses' law as they pretended to be, they would have brought the man too
- What they really wanted to do was to trap Jesus
- As usual, they are being hypocrites

# The Adulterous Woman

## 8:1-11



- This whole event was an attempt to trap Jesus and have something with which to accuse Him
- The fact that they had ulterior motives should be obvious in several ways
- First, they had brought only the woman
- But the law required both the adulterer and the adulteress to be put to death
- Why had they not brought the man?

# The Adulterous Woman

## 8:1-11



- Second, why bring her to Jesus for judgment?
- He held no earthly position whatever that gave Him the authority to judge the case
- Such cases were to be judged by the priests or others in positions of such responsibility
- Third, if they knew what the law said, why ask Him about it?
- The whole case from the beginning was a planned effort to trap Jesus

# The Adulterous Woman

## 8:1-11



- Jesus stooped and wrote on the ground with His finger as if He had not heard them
- Why do this?
- He was in no hurry to judge the matter
- He was writing in the dirt
- No one knows what Jesus was writing
- Some scholars have suggested that He was writing the sins of those who accused the woman

# The Adulterous Woman

## 8:1-11



- And others that He was writing out the Mosaic Law or perhaps relevant Scripture to condemn the accusers like Exodus 23:7
- They pressed the question upon Him
- They were determined to extort an answer from Him
- Jesus did, however, skillfully remove Himself from the Pharisees' trap while placing the accusers in a trap of His own
- He delivered the woman to them and asked them to judge her if they could

# The Adulterous Woman

## 8:1-11



- Then He stooped and wrote again
- This gave them time to consider the matter while not having to face Him as they thought about it
- This turned the table on them
- It gave them the duty to kill her, if it was to be done
- He appealed to the very source of authority they had cited: the Old Testament law

# The Adulterous Woman

## 8:1-11



- He then called upon them to demonstrate their commitment to the law and to the guilt of the woman by being the ones to cast the stones
- Further, He appealed to their own consciences
- In the presence of all the people, He was forcing them to claim, if they stoned her, that they themselves were innocent of guilt
- They had come to Him with hypocritical intentions, not to uphold the law, but to trap Him
- His approach called attention to their wickedness and hypocritical motives

# The Adulterous Woman

## 8:1-11



- The oldest and wisest Pharisees are the first to understand the trap
- The consciences of these men would not allow them to be the first to throw a stone at her
- They left, from the oldest to the last, or from the most honorable to those of the least repute
- There is also the possibility that they may have reasoned that if they stone her the Romans will ask why they took her death sentence upon themselves
- But Jesus said only those without sin to do the stoning and that doesn't mean them because they know He has chastised them



# The Adulterous Woman

## 8:1-11



- Jesus reset the trap
- He neither authorizes the stoning nor contradicts the Law
- There is no way for them to recover from Jesus' trap except to walk away as sinners discredited in the eyes of the people!
- *the woman standing in the midst*, But if they all went out, how could she be in the midst?
- It is not said that all the people whom our Lord had been instructing went out, but only her accusers, John 8:2
- The rest undoubtedly continued with their teacher

# The Adulterous Woman

## 8:1-11



- Jesus asked whether she had been condemned by any of those men who had accused her
- When she confirmed that none had, He said He did not condemn her either, but she should go and sin no more
- Did Jesus here violate the law that said she should be stoned?
- Did He teach us that we should not condemn sin, and that God is too loving to punish people for sin?
- We may see how wicked is the doctrine of those who say that God is the author of sin

# The Adulterous Woman

## 8:1-11



- Christ did not say to the woman: I do not condemn your sin; or, go and live now as you please, I will free you from all punishment due to any sin you shall commit
- But He only said, *go and sin no more*, thus preserving His amiable virtue of mercy, and still not encouraging sin
- Perhaps Jesus did not judge the woman because His purpose was to avoid the trap of the Pharisees and to show the crowd the extent of their sins

# The Adulterous Woman

## 8:1-11



- Jesus also stated His mission was not to come to judge the world but to save it, John 12:47, 8:16
- He condemns the sin but He has given the woman the chance to repent her sin just as He gives us all the same mercy
- His mercy does not cancel out her accountability for sin
- She still has to live with the consequences of her actions and the suffering her actions cause
- His judgment will come later at the end of her life when she has had the opportunity to atone for her sin through His death and resurrection

# The Messiah: The Light of the World 8:12



- When the accusers withdrew and the woman left, the Lord continued teaching the crowds
- The accusers had wanted to stir and confuse the crowds
- However, the Lord intended to focus on His teachings by these words, *I am the light of the world*
- Once again we have Jesus identifying Himself with the significant and symbolic words: I AM which reminds us of Yahweh's revelation of Himself to Moses 3 times as I AM in Exodus 3:13-14

# The Messiah: The Light of the World 8:12



- Jesus is often referred to as the “light”, John 1:4, 12:35-36,46, 9:5
- Light illuminates, giving understanding and making things clear, Ephesians 5:13; John 3:19-21; Psalms 119:105
- As such, it often symbolizes righteousness and truth
- In Matthew's Gospel the disciples are told *"You are the light of the world."*
- There is no contradiction because the disciples, like John the Baptist, are the light of the world only as they reflect Jesus Christ, the true Light

# The Messiah: The Light of the World 8:12



- Darkness is the opposite
- It often symbolizes ignorance, confusion, and evil
- *He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness,* He shall be saved from ignorance, infidelity, and sin
- If he follows Me, becomes My disciple, and believes in My name, he shall have My Spirit to bear witness with his, that he is a child of God
- He shall have the light of life - such a light as brings and supports life

# Jesus Defends His Self-Witness

## 8:13-20



- *The Pharisees*, Namely, some of them who were then present, but different persons from those who had brought in the woman
- They were furious at the late disappointment of their brethren; said unto him, *You bear witness of Yourself*
- *Your witness*, signifies; is not to be admitted as true, but may rather be suspected of vain glory
- They replied angrily recalling His own word in John 5:31, where Jesus said, *“If I bear witness of Myself, My witness is not true”*



# Jesus Defends His Self-Witness

## 8:13-20



- Both passages, John 5:31 and 8:13 are referring to the Law from Deuteronomy 19:15 where it is stated that a man cannot be convicted of a crime on the testimony of one witness
- Deuteronomy 17:6 and Numbers 35:30 demand that several witnesses must be willing to give testimony for a conviction in the case of capital crime
- It was also apparently part of the oral law that a man could not bear witness only on his own behalf

# Jesus Defends His Self-Witness

## 8:13-20



- Jesus then added, in 5:32 *There is another who bears witness of Me*
- To the same effect He replies here, John 8:14 *Even if I bear witness of Myself, My witness is true*
- For He is inseparably united to the Father
- *I know*, And from firm and certain knowledge proceeds the most perfect flawless testimony; *where I came, and where I am going*
- How does this knowledge relate to His testimony?

# Jesus Defends His Self-Witness

## 8:13-20



- These are two essential facts of His testimony because they identify to His supernatural knowledge of both His origin and His destiny; something natural man cannot claim
- The requirement of two witnesses was based on the imperfection of individual knowledge, and the untrustworthiness of individual reality and truth
- His evidence, as that of One who knew every circumstance affecting that of which He testified, was valid, for the perfection of His knowledge implied that He was divine

# Jesus Defends His Self-Witness

## 8:13-20



- They are judging only by what they can see and by the Law of Moses
- They only see a man like themselves
- St. Augustine writes, “...*in that flesh they fail to see the glory of God's Son shining*”
- The Pharisees are also using the Law of Moses as their standard
- St. Paul wrote about the imperfection of the Law, Romans 7:5-6

# Jesus Defends His Self-Witness

## 8:13-20



- *I judge no one*, This verse fits well with the story of the adulteress
- Though judgment was not the object of His mission, it was, as He had taught in John 3:19 the result of the manifestation of the Light
- But in the cases in which the result followed, the judgment was not according to the flesh, but was in accord with the essential truth

# Jesus Defends His Self-Witness

## 8:13-20



- The judgment of the Pharisees is a judgment of evaluation of Jesus and the judgment of Jesus is the judgment that pertains to salvation
- “*I judge no one*, For if I wanted to condemn, then you would have been condemned...but the time of judgment has not come yet. Here the Lord implies that He will not be alone but the Father will also be with Him to condemn them.” St. John Chrysostom

# Jesus Defends His Self-Witness

## 8:13-20



- He now proceeds to show again that the technical requirement of the Law was satisfied by His witness
- In chapter 5 Jesus gives 5 witnesses who testify to the truth of His claims but here in chapter 8 He states His testimony can be verified by one witness other than Himself
- The Father is His second witness and with His own testimony the requirement for two witnesses under the requirement of the Law of Moses is fulfilled, Deuteronomy 19:15

# Jesus Defends His Self-Witness

## 8:13-20



- *Where is Your Father?*, They knew well enough by other discourses, that He had called and declared God to be His Father
- But they wanted to make Him own it again, that they might accuse Him as guilty of blasphemy
- To "know" Jesus is to believe in Him and that to accept the mystery of His divinity means knowing the Father
- He traces their ignorance of the Father to its true cause, i.e., to their neglect of the only means by which God could be known, Jesus Christ



# Jesus Defends His Self-Witness

## 8:13-20



- This thought has met us already in John 1:18 and will meet us again in John 14:9, 16:3
- If they really knew the witness of one, they would know the witness of both
- The site of Jesus' discussion with the Scribes and Pharisees is identified in this passage
- The word “*treasury*” was applied to the trumpet-shaped boxes placed in the court of the women for the reception of alms

# Jesus Defends His Self-Witness

## 8:13-20



- The place is called the women's court, but it does not really indicate that it is reserved for women only, or that men are forbidden to enter., rather it indicates that the women are allowed to enter there, and not into other area
- This notice of place is interesting in many ways
- The court of the women was one of the most public places in the Temple area
- He taught, then, openly and fearlessly

# Jesus Defends His Self-Witness

## 8:13-20



- *no one laid hands on Him, for His hour had not yet come, Jesus is in charge of His own destiny*
- It is the Father's plan and man does not, and indeed cannot, control these events
- We heard this before in John 7:30
- Men shall be able to do nothing against Christ, or any that belong unto Him, till the time comes that God has set in His wise and eternal thoughts



# Jesus Predicts His Departure

## 8:21-30

- This next section has several parallels with chapter 7:33-36
- *will die in your sin*, That is, they will seek the Messiah and will desire His coming
- But the Messiah that they expect will not come
- And, as they have rejected Him, and there is no other Savior, they must die in their sins
- The word "sin" is used in the singular in verse 21 and not in the plural as it is in some translations



# Jesus Predicts His Departure

## 8:21-30

- It is used collectively to express the whole condition of people's estrangement from God
- They will die in their sin without forgiveness, and as they did not seek Him where they might find Him, they cannot come where He shall be
- They now understood that He spoke concerning His death; but before, John 7:35, they thought He spoke of going to some of other provinces, to preach to the dispersed Jews
- Notice the increasing of urgency in Jesus' warnings to the Jews by using this phrase 3 times



# Jesus Predicts His Departure

## 8:21-30

- They must make a decision about Him before it is too late
- The Lord Jesus Christ issues a warning to unbelievers
- Their denial will propel them to eternal suffering
- The warnings He directs to unbelievers are terrifying since there would be no time to repent
- Very often the Lord opens the gate of hope to people through kind and gentle words



# Jesus Predicts His Departure

## 8:21-30

- Yet He also uses stern warnings to protect His children from stumbling; or to encourage them to rise up and move away from what they have stumbled into
- Someone may comment that since He directs these words to people who insist on not believing, then why does the Lord tell them “*you will seek Me*”?
- There are many ways of seeking the Lord who is the Word, the Truth, and all Wisdom
- Nevertheless...to ‘seek’ is sometimes used to refer to those planning against him, as John 7:30 reveals



# Jesus Predicts His Departure

## 8:21-30

- Also in 8:37 they were seeking Him to kill Him
- Therefore the words “...*you will seek Me*” is directed to those who seek in the wrong way
- It does not oppose the promise. “...*for he who seeks finds...*” (Matthew 7:8)
- There are always distinctions among those who seek the Lord Jesus Christ
- Not everyone asks for salvation in the correct manner or with the right purpose





# Jesus Predicts His Departure

## 8:21-30

- *Will He kill Himself*, It is difficult to know whether this question was asked from ignorance or malice
- Self-murder was esteemed then, as it is now, as one of the greatest crimes
- They probably wished to spread this rumor to spoil His image before the people
- If He intends to go to Hades, He will indeed be beyond their reach
- They expect to go to Abraham's bosom and between Him and them there will be the great gap which no one can pass, Luke 16:22-26



# Jesus Predicts His Departure

## 8:21-30

- They are by origin and nature of the earth
- He was by origin and nature from heaven
- Of the world, their feelings and thoughts and life were of the earth, and, by devotion to things of the earth, they are destroying the spirit made in the image of God, which is within them, and the link between them and heaven
- *You are from beneath*, You are governed by the lowest and vilest views and feelings, such as are opposed to heaven, and such as have their origin in earth or in hell



# Jesus Predicts His Departure

## 8:21-30

- He is from heaven in origin, and is divine in nature
- *I am from above* , My views are heavenly, and My words should have been so interpreted
- He has come to reveal the heavenly and the divine to the earthly and the human
- In Him, and in Him only, can their spirits find deliverance from sin, and find the true life; for in Him, and in Him only, the divine and the human meet



# Jesus Predicts His Departure

## 8:21-30

- He now further explains what He meant by these words in John 8:21
- The words, as they are twice repeated in this verse
- These two verses explain the urgency of Jesus' warning
- But what will happen to those who refuse to believe?
- They will go to their graves in sin and without the gift of eternal life
- Instead of inheriting the kingdom that could have been theirs, they will inherit eternal darkness



# Jesus Predicts His Departure

## 8:21-30

- Jesus stated quite directly one of the great truths of the gospel: All who do not believe in Him will die in their sins
- These Jews did not believe in Him, and that is why they were rejecting His teachings
- He had said they would die in sin (verse 21)
- Here He showed that the reason for this is that they did not believe in Him
- This was an enormous claim for Him to make



# Jesus Predicts His Departure

## 8:21-30

- He was teaching that all people had to accept Him for who He claimed to be, or they would be eternally lost
- The only way to receive eternal life, then, is by believing in Him
- Consider the consequences of such statements to people who clearly reject Jesus
- St. Augustine comments that the Lord Jesus Christ intended to remind them of the words God had spoken to Moses, “I am who I AM” (Ex 3). This was God’s answer when Moses asked Him about His name. By this, God indicates that He is the beginning; He is the past, the present, and the future



# Jesus Predicts His Departure

## 8:21-30

- The Pharisees, being angry at the liberty with which Jesus spoke to them, demand of Him in a rage, *Who are you*, to speak to us in this authoritative manner, to say that we shall die in our sins?
- They ask the question in the tone of scorn which they have already expressed in John 8:22
- Jesus answered them, that he was the *Beginning*, Author, Creator, and Ruler of all things
- Jesus has clearly asserted His divinity with the reference to Himself as "I AM" in verse 24



# Jesus Predicts His Departure

## 8:21-30

- The Jews did not miss this as a clear statement of His claim to divinity, which is why they sought to kill him
- They appear to take the sentence as though it was incomplete, “I am . . .;” “Well, *who are you?*”
- We have again, as in John 8:19, to note the attempt to draw from Him some definite statement which may be made the ground of a technical charge; but this He again avoids
- To answer their question regarding who He was, Jesus did not further elaborate; rather, He called their attention to all the things He had already said





# Jesus Predicts His Departure

## 8:21-30

- There was enough proof in all He had told them, that they should have known who He was
- If they did not know by this time, further statements from Him would not convince them; so He did not try
- So, Jesus went on, saying that He had other things to say, but there was no point in saying them
- There are present to His mind now many things to say of them, and these, if said, would be in words of condemnation; but He refrains



# Jesus Predicts His Departure

## 8:21-30

- There is present to His mind also the great work He had to do—to speak to the world the eternal truth of God
- He had spoken, not on His own authority, but things given Him by the One who sent Him
- They were true, because of the One from whom they came
- But the people did not accept them, and did not even understand that He was talking about the Father



# Jesus Predicts His Departure

## 8:21-30

- Both the Crucifixion and Ascension are implied here
- Now for the first time, they are marked out as the instruments of the Crucifixion, Acts 3:15 and therefore the means by which He will return to His Father's throne
- The Jews had the opportunity of knowing who He is by listening to His words but afterwards when they know Him as "the one lifted up" it might be too late
- *then you will know*, These words confirm the view that the teaching of these verses arises immediately out of their present ignorance



# Jesus Predicts His Departure

## 8:21-30

- Then the veil will be removed
- Then the death of Christ will be followed by His glory
- They will then know that He is divine, and that the acts and words which they cannot now understand are part of the divine life in union with the Father
- Now they marvel and ask, John 7:15 then they shall know that according as the Father taught Him, He spoke these things
- Now they cannot understand the witness of the Father, John 8:19, then they shall know that He that sent Him was with Him



# Jesus Predicts His Departure

## 8:21-30

- Jesus is also giving them another Biblical reference using the divine Messianic title of Daniel 7:13 "*Son of man*" as well as the imagery of Numbers 21:4-9 when the people looked up to their salvation raised on a pole of wood [which prefigured the crucifixion]
- At that time He will draw everyone to Him who believes in Him
- At that moment it will become clear that He is truly the divine I AM and that He has the power of raising up God's true children to eternal life



# Jesus Predicts His Departure

## 8:21-30

- *I always do those things that please Him*, The words furnish the reason for the presence of the Father in every act and moment of His life
- All things done by Him at all times were in accordance with the Father's will
- *The Father has not left Me alone*, Though you shall have power to put Me to death, yet this shall not be because He has abandoned Me



# Jesus Predicts His Departure

## 8:21-30

- No - He is ever with Me, because I do that which please Him; and it is His pleasure that I should lay down My life for the salvation of the world
- The result of Jesus' teaching was that many people *believed in Him*
- This faith was immature, so Jesus immediately challenged them to consider what it would take to truly be His disciples in the next verses
- “Many of the Jews believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, yet it was not with full faith. They believed the simple notions of the faith.”  
St. John Chrysostom

# The Truth Shall Make You Free

## 8:31-36



- Jesus is challenging the Jews who professed belief in Him to more than a superficial belief
- He is calling them to true discipleship that requires His words to transform their whole lives with the kind of faith that will bring them to know the truth and to become children of God free from their bondage to sin
- It is not enough to receive God's truth - we must retain and walk in it
- And it is only when we receive the truth, love it, keep it, and walk in it, that we are the genuine disciples of Christ



# The Truth Shall Make You Free

## 8:31-36



- True disciple perseveres in the true faith, and in the observance of His words
- It is not sufficient to believe; one must likewise do what His words command us to do: nor will it be sufficient to have the true faith for a time; one must persevere in that faith to the end
- The knowledge He is speaking of more than intellectual knowledge
- It is knowledge that comes from divine Revelation as given by God the Holy Spirit

# The Truth Shall Make You Free

## 8:31-36



- Knowing truth is knowing Christ Himself in the whole Revelation of His humanity and divinity—God become man
- It is realizing that the inaccessible Almighty God has become man in order that we can become, in truth, sons and daughters of God
- This kind of knowledge sets us free because it raises us from our former position as "slaves to sin" in all the attachments of our fallen nature and raises us up in a state of grace as heirs in the family of God

# The Truth Shall Make You Free

## 8:31-36



- The Jews protest, *We are Abraham's descendants, and have never been in bondage to anyone ...*
- They were upset at these words, as if He hinted they were slaves, and not a free people
- Their pride misinterprets His words, and expresses itself in a boast which passes the limits of historical truth
- They had been in bondage many times; slavery to the Egyptians, in captivity by the Assyrians and Babylonians; dominated politically by the Persians, Greeks and now the Romans

# The Truth Shall Make You Free

## 8:31-36



- They realize Jesus is speaking spiritually and not historically and so they reply that they have never "sold" themselves to pagan gods—which is also not altogether true
- In the Temple sacrifice is made to the Roman god Caesar Tiberius and to the Roman people twice daily, according to Flavius Josephus [*Wars of the Jews 2.10.4*]
- *commits sin*, The Greek word is a present participle, expressing the continuance of the deeds of sin

# The Truth Shall Make You Free

## 8:31-36



- It means, not simply the committing individual sins, from which no man is free, but the state of the life which is sinful; the state which is opposed to doing the will of the Father, and is expressed in other words as “working iniquity” Matthew 7:21,23
- Our Savior here corrects their mistake, letting them know, that He was not speaking about any physical, but spiritual slavery
- Not of the freedom of men’s bodies from the power of enemies, but of the freedom of men’s souls from the slavery and dominion of lusts and corruptions
- He that does sin is the servant of sin

# The Truth Shall Make You Free

## 8:31-36



- Jesus then extended the illustration of slavery
- They were slaves because of sin, despite their claim to the contrary
- One, who is truly a son in a family, is in the family forever
- His ancestral lineage cannot be changed
- This seemed to be their concept of their favor with Abraham and therefore with God
- They thought they were descendants of Abraham and therefore needed no one to make them free

# The Truth Shall Make You Free

## 8:31-36



- A slave or servant, though he live ever so long in his master's house, his condition is quite different from that of a son of the family
- And thus Christ puts them in mind that though they be of the race of Abraham, and in that sense can pretend to be his children, yet having made themselves slaves to sin, and remaining in that sin, by which they refuse to believe in Him, their Messiah, they are not the spiritual children of Abraham, nor can they inherit the promises made to Abraham, till, by the grace of Christ, they believe in Him, and become His children

# The Truth Shall Make You Free

## 8:31-36



- As the Son in the Father's house, Jesus could purchase them from their slavery to sin and set them free
- They could not achieve this for themselves, nor could anyone outside the family (Deity) grant it
- The fact Jesus offered freedom to them and to us, does not of itself guarantee we will remain free
- We remain free so long as we continue in the truth and in abiding in Jesus' word - verses 31-32
- "Man never was without free-will; but, having the grace of Christ, his will is truly made free from the servitude of sin." St. Augustine



# Abraham's Seed and Satan's

## 8:37-47



- Jesus acknowledged that they were Abraham's descendants in the flesh, but not in spirit
- The immediate proof that they were not Abraham's spiritual descendants was that they sought to kill Jesus because they had rejected His word
- Such was sinful and demonstrated their bondage to sin, verse 34
- This was the bondage Jesus had warned them about and for which He had offered the solution

# Abraham's Seed and Satan's

## 8:37-47



- There was no room for His doctrine in their minds
- The word of God requires a heart which is empty
- A heart filled with earthly things, carnal interests ambition, thoughts of raising a fortune, and with the love of the superfluities and pleasures of life, is not fit to receive the seed of the kingdom
- When a man shuts his heart against it by his passions, he at the same time opens it to all sorts of crimes

# Abraham's Seed and Satan's

## 8:37-47



- The word of God met with obstructions, and did not penetrate into their hearts
- They were so filled with pride, and prejudice, and false notions, that they would not receive His truth
- And as they did not have His truth or spirit, and could not bear it, they sought to kill him
- Through their deeds and plots they confirmed their acceptance to be adopted children of Satan
- I speak nothing but that unchangeable, eternal truth which I have received from the bosom of God

# Abraham's Seed and Satan's

## 8:37-47



- Jesus saw the Father, for He was the Word that was with God from eternity
- The Jews were also following what they had learned from their
- Father
- But they were rejecting Jesus, so they did not have the same Father
- *what you have seen with your father*, That is, you follow the suggestions of the devil, whom, verse 44 in plain terms, He calls their *father*

# Abraham's Seed and Satan's

## 8:37-47



- *Abraham is our father*, It depends on what the Jews understood Jesus to mean in the second part of verse 38
- If they understand that Jesus is referring to Satan as their father, which doesn't become clear until verse 44, then the Jews are responding in protest to Jesus' statement
- However if they believe Jesus is referring to His own Father, then they are declaring that they want nothing to do with Jesus' Father because they have Abraham

# Abraham's Seed and Satan's

## 8:37-47



- They continued to think physically while Jesus spoke spiritually
- If they were true children of Abraham (spiritually), they would act like Abraham
- Not only faith but good works make men children of Abraham
- Instead, they were trying to kill One who told them the truth from God
- Abraham was distinguished for love to man as well as God
- He liberated the captives Genesis 14:14-16

# Abraham's Seed and Satan's

## 8:37-47



- He was distinguished for hospitality to strangers Genesis 18:1-8
- He received the revelations of God to him, Genesis 12:1-4, 15:4-6
- It was for these things that he is so much commended in the New Testament Romans 4:9, 9:8; Galatians 3:6; and, as the Jews sought to kill Jesus instead of treating Him hospitably and kindly, they showed that they had none of the spirit of Abraham

# Abraham's Seed and Satan's

## 8:37-47



- Jesus continued to emphasize that conduct indicates whom one has for a spiritual father
- In particular, He said that the deeds of the Jews proved who their father was
- The Jews then caught on that He was not talking about physical descent, so they claimed their Father was God
- But their claim did not help their case, because Jesus' argument was based on their works



# Abraham's Seed and Satan's

## 8:37-47



- If they were true children of God, they would have recognized Jesus as having come from God and would have loved and served Him
- John the Baptist had a similar exchange with the Jews in which he called the Pharisees and Sadducees *brood of vipers*, Matthew 3:7
- The Baptist also told them even though they claim to have Abraham as their father if God so desired He could *raise up children to Abraham from these stones*, Matthew 3:9

# Abraham's Seed and Satan's

## 8:37-47



- The Jews shift their argument from Abraham to God
- There are two responses here
  1. That they are true, legitimate descendants of Abraham
  2. That because Abraham is the physical father; God is their spiritual Father
- Physical descent through Abraham is not enough for inheriting God's promises and the gift of salvation
- Idol worship is compared to fornication or adultery

# Abraham's Seed and Satan's

## 8:37-47



- The Israelites who engaged in unfaithfulness through the worship of false gods were called "the children of fornication", Hosea 2:4, Isaiah 1:21; Jeremiah 2:20, 3:8-9; Ezekiel 16
- Therefore in verse 41 when the Jews deny that they are "illegitimate", the children of fornication, they are also denying that they have strayed from the covenant
- In arguing that God is indeed their Father they are restating the terms of the covenant with Moses where Israel became "children of God", Exodus 4:22 and Yahweh became Israel's Father Deuteronomy

# Abraham's Seed and Satan's

## 8:37-47



- *We were not born of fornication*, We” is strongly emphatic, expressing their pride in the theocracy, and their spiritual superiority to other nations
- It is important to note here that in our Lord’s own words there is an assertion of the oneness of nature and of will with that of the Father, and yet the distinction of person is maintained
- He *came from God*, but He proceeded from the divine essence
- He *proceeded forth*, and yet He was sent

# Abraham's Seed and Satan's

## 8:37-47



- From John 8:33 onwards, they had constantly misunderstood His expressions
- The reason is that the subject-matter of His discourse is altogether above them
- He is speaking of spiritual things, which are spiritually discerned
- They, if children of the Father whom they claimed, would recognize these spiritual truths and know the language of home

# Abraham's Seed and Satan's

## 8:37-47



- *you are not able to listen to My word*, They could and did hear it with their ears
- They heard the sound of it, but they could not discern the spiritual sense and meaning of it
- It was not given to them to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, Matthew 13:11
- And the reason was, because they were blinded by prejudice, and by their own lusts and corrupt affections, hearing they heard, and did not understand; and seeing they saw, and did not perceive

# Abraham's Seed and Satan's

## 8:37-47



- The father who has been referred to in John 8:38,41 is now definitely named
- The relation between father and son is maintained, but the father of the thoughts and acts of those to whom He speaks was not God, not Abraham, but the devil
- *You are of your father the devil, You are the seed of the old serpent, John 8:37*
- Like father like son
- What Satan desires, they desire; because they are filled with his nature

# Abraham's Seed and Satan's

## 8:37-47



- Awful state of godless sinful men!
- They have the nearest alliance to Satan; they partake of his nature and have in them the same principles and tendencies which characterize the very nature and essence of the devil
- Jesus then described the Devil whom they were serving
- It was through him that Adam transgressed; in consequence of which death entered into the world, and slew him and all his descendants
- This was the sentiment of the Jews themselves



# Abraham's Seed and Satan's

## 8:37-47



- The reference to the murderer is suggested here by the fact that the Jews had been seeking to kill our Lord, John 8:40
- They are true to the nature which their father had from the beginning
- Satan has no place in the sphere of the truth; it is not the region of his action and outer life; and the result of this is that there is no truth in the sphere of his thought and inner life
- Had he been true, he would have come to stand in the light and life of truth

# Abraham's Seed and Satan's

## 8:37-47



- *he speaks from his own resources*, This is in contrast to the work of Christ, John 8:28,40 and to the work of the Holy Spirit, John 16:13
- The Holy Spirit will not speak of Himself; He came to speak the truth which He heard from God
- The devil speaks a lie, Genesis 3, and this is of his own, Matthew 12:35
- *he is a liar and the father of it*, The verse ends as it begins, by a reference to the Jews whom He is addressing

# Abraham's Seed and Satan's

## 8:37-47



- They were of the nature of him whose spiritual children they were
- The murderous thoughts in their hearts, and their non-receptivity of truth, plainly indicated who their father was
- St. Augustine compares heretics, who drive Christians out of the Church, to the devil, who was the cause of our first parents' banishment from paradise

# Abraham's Seed and Satan's

## 8:37-47



- “The Holy Bible states that a liar proceeds from the devil who “is a liar and the father of it” (Jn 8:44). That is why Satan has been called the father of liars; whereas the Truth is God. The Lord Himself declares: “I am the way, the truth, and the life” (Jn 14:6). Do you not see, therefore, how we could be estranged from God on account of lying; and with whom we become united (through lies)?! Since this is so, we need to love truth with all our strength and zeal. This will enable us to fulfill our real desire to be saved. We also need to guard ourselves against all lies so that they do not separate us from the truth and life.” Fr. Dorotheous

# Abraham's Seed and Satan's

## 8:37-47



- The Devil was the source of lies, and the people were following his lies
- It follows that they would reject what Jesus was saying, because it was the truth
- They preferred the Devil's lies
- When Jesus told the truth, they rejected it
- Here was perfect truth presented to men, and they refused to accept it, because it was the truth, and they were themselves children of him who was a liar

# Abraham's Seed and Satan's

## 8:37-47



- *if I tell the truth, why do you not believe Me,* We may suppose that the last question was probably followed by a pause, during which any one might have answered the challenge
- No one of all who had watched Him in Galilee and Judea dared utter a word
- Their silence is the seal to His own testimony
- But if He is thought of by these as without sin, they cannot think of His words as untrue
- They admit, then, that He speaks the truth, and yet they do not believe

# Abraham's Seed and Satan's

## 8:37-47



- Again in verse 47 He answers the question which He has Himself asked, and gives more fully the same reason which He gave in John 8:43
- In John 8:44 He asserted that they were of the father the devil, and therefore lived to do the lusts of the devil
- In the same way he who is of God does the will of God, and hears the words of God
- The words of God are those which He has been speaking unto them, John 8:26

# Abraham's Seed and Satan's

## 8:37-47



- Here, then, is the answer to the question, “*why do you not believe Me*”
- Rabbis and priests, teachers of the Law, judges of truth, offerors of sacrifice, keepers of feasts, worshippers in synagogues and Temple—they were all this; but they were not “of God”
- The bottom line was that they were rejecting His words because they were not of God
- If they were really determined to please God and really concerned about God’s will, they would have recognized the truth of His claims and would have accepted Him



# Before Abraham Was, I AM

## 8:48-59



- The Jews had reached the point that they had no sensible answers to the factual evidence Jesus had presented
- He had called on them, if they could, to convict Him of sin
- They responded by saying He was a Samaritan and had a demon
- This constituted nothing but unfounded name calling
- They had on other occasions accused Him of having a demon, 7:20, 8:52, 10:20; Matthew 9:34, 12:24; Mark 3:22
- But they made no effort whatever to answer His evidence or to prove their claims

# Before Abraham Was, I AM

## 8:48-59



- *a Samaritan*, This was a term of scorn and reproach
- It had the force of charging Him with being a heretic or a semi-pagan, and a violator of the Covenant, because the Samaritans were regarded as such
- The charge of being a Samaritan He passes over and do not address
- His words soon after taught that a Samaritan may be more truly the child of God than them

# Before Abraham Was, I AM

## 8:48-59



- He denies the statement that He is possessed by an evil power
- His life had been the constant honoring of the Father and doing His will John 4:31
- Their works and words were constantly dishonoring Him
- The contrast suggests that this dishonor was not of Him only; but also of the Father whom He honored, and whom they claimed as their God

# Before Abraham Was, I AM

## 8:48-59



- *“but I honor My Father, and you dishonor Me,* These words are intended to convey the following: ‘I do not honor Myself so that you do not think that I am arrogant. I honor the only One; and if you knew Me you would have honored Me just as I honor the Father. I act worthily, while you do not.’ St. Augustine
- Another proof that I am not influenced by any spirit but that which proceeds from God
- But *there is One who seeks and judges,* will punish you for your determined stubbornness and iniquity

# Before Abraham Was, I AM

## 8:48-59



- *he shall never see death*, That is, he shall not gain an eternal death, as they who die in sin
- But they understood His words of the death of the body
- As if He is saying, “You accuse Me of being possessed with a devil, because I preach to you a doctrine far different from what you are accustomed to hear; but I speak nothing but the truth; I give honor to My Father, I execute His orders; and the words I now speak to you, are the words of eternal life”

# Before Abraham Was, I AM

## 8:48-59



- Whoever observes the Word of God shall not die
- Moses promised a long life to those who observed what was commanded in the old law, and offered them as their reward goods and temporal prosperity
- But He offers them an eternal life
- Believe His words, keep them, and observe His ordinances, and you shall not feel the death of the soul, the second, eternal, and most miserable of deaths

# Before Abraham Was, I AM

## 8:48-59



- The Jews take a spiritual statement and think it is physical
- They think of physical death and say this statement proved Jesus had a demon
- This is the third time they have accused Jesus of being possessed by demons
- They pointed out that Abraham and the prophets all died
- So how could Jesus keep people from death?
- Such a claim, they reasoned, was a claim to be greater than Abraham and the prophets

# Before Abraham Was, I AM

## 8:48-59



- *Who do You make Yourself out to be?* The major question to be resolved, and the question for which they were giving all the wrong answers, is the question of who Jesus is
- Jesus really was claiming to be greater than Abraham and the prophets
- To these Jews, such a claim would automatically prove Him to be wrong – how could anyone be greater than Abraham?
- But again, they overlooked the evidence



# Before Abraham Was, I AM

## 8:48-59



- Jesus responded that He had not said what He did for the sake of honoring Himself
- Jesus is not seeking human fame but seeks the will of the Father
- This is the answer to their question, “*Who do You make Yourself out to be?*” He plainly said that His Father is the One they called their God
- God is His Father, and He was the One who gave Jesus glory
- If God gave Him glory, how could the Jews refuse to do likewise?

# Before Abraham Was, I AM

## 8:48-59



- He knows the Father and the glory [honor] which the Father has assigned to Him
- He is a liar, who either affirms what he ought to deny, or denies what he ought to affirm
- They called God their God, while enemies to Him both in their spirit and conduct
- *It is My Father who honors Me*, by witnessing from heaven that I am His beloved Son

# Before Abraham Was, I AM

## 8:48-59



- By sending Me into the world to accomplish His work
- By many signs and wonders: and you say, that this My Father is your God
- If therefore you will not give credit to Me and My testimony, yet you ought to give credit to Him, whom you own as your God
- The Father who glorified Him was the God whom they professed to serve

# Before Abraham Was, I AM

## 8:48-59



- But Jesus again explained that the reason they did not accept any of His claims was that they did not have a right relationship with God
- Their wrong attitude toward God is what kept them from accepting Him
- The Son's knowledge of the Father is eternal
- If He had admitted (as they thought He should) that He did not have a right relationship with God, He would be telling a lie

# Before Abraham Was, I AM

## 8:48-59



- By charging Him with being a demon and speaking false testimony, they were trying to get Him to agree to a lie
- He could not do that
- Since Jesus affirmed He was right, He stated the conclusion that followed – the Jews were the ones who were lying

# Before Abraham Was, I AM

## 8:48-59



- They had asked in scorn if He were greater than their father Abraham, John 8:53
- His words have shown that He was
- He now, with the thoughts of John 8:39 still present, contrasts the delight of him whom they claimed as father, when he saw from afar the Messianic advent, with their rejection of the Messiah who is actually among them
- *Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, he earnestly desired to see My day*

# Before Abraham Was, I AM

## 8:48-59



- Abraham realized the fullness of the promises made to him, and believed in the Lord that the blessing should be fulfilled to his seed
- He, too, had kept God's word, and in the true sense had not seen death, Genesis 15:1-6, 22:18
- The word "day," here, is used to denote the time, the appearance, the advent, and the manner of life of the Messiah, Luke 17:26; John 9:4; Matthew 11:12
- "My day' refers to the day of the Crucifixion which Abraham saw in the symbol and offering of the lamb and Isaac." St. John Chrysostom

# Before Abraham Was, I AM

## 8:48-59



- *My day*, My entrance into this world, My incarnation, My birth, My manifestation in Israel, My death and passion, St. Irenæus, Origen, St. Cyril
- *he saw it and was glad*, He died in faith, Hebrews 11:13
- He saw it in spirit, for God revealed it to him
- He saw it approaching in the birth of his son Isaac, and in the miraculous deliverance of his dear son, when he was commanded to offer him in sacrifice to the Lord



# Before Abraham Was, I AM

## 8:48-59



- The liveliness of his faith made him, as it were, present at the time of His birth, though then so far off, St. Chrysostom, Leont., Theophylactus, Euthymius
- Christ here teaches us two things
  1. That He was before Abraham
  2. That the Jews were not true sons of Abraham
- The Jews, thinking physically as always, argued that Jesus was less than fifty years old, so He could not possibly have seen Abraham who had been dead for years

# Before Abraham Was, I AM

## 8:48-59



- Christ here speaks of his eternal existence as God
- Abraham, like all men, came into being
- There was a time when he was not
- But there was never a time when the Son of God was not
- In the time before Abraham, in the eternity before time, John 1:1, He still was
- He is the I AM, present equally in the human “was,” and “is,” and “is to come.”

# Before Abraham Was, I AM

## 8:48-59



- St. Augustine says, “*I am*. He does not say, *before Abraham was made, I was made*: because, as the Son of God, he never was made: but *I am*, which shows his eternal divine nature”
- In using these words Jesus gives another revelation of His divinity
- It appears that the Jews understood Him as asserting His Godhead; and, supposing Him to be a blasphemer, they proceeded to stone him, according to the law, Leviticus 24:16

# Before Abraham Was, I AM

## 8:48-59



- His own Divinity is the only explanation of what He has said; and it is in these words so plainly asserted, that those who had constantly misunderstood can misunderstand no more
- Here we are simply told that He *hid Himself and went out of the temple*,
- However, some make a question here, how He could pass through the midst of them?
- Whether He made His body invisible?

# Before Abraham Was, I AM

## 8:48-59



- Or whether He struck His enemies with blindness, or thickened the air before their eyes?
- This may not imply more than that He passed among the crowd which was around Him, out of the Temple, and thus avoided the stones which they had taken up to cast at Him



# Discussion

- If Jesus let the woman go, of what would they accuse Him? If He punished her, of what would they accuse Him? In what way were the religious leaders themselves "breaking the law"?
- What conclusion did Jesus reach? Did he deny or acknowledge the woman's guilt?
- Many people use this example to argue that we should not rebuke people for sin, including even serious moral sins like adultery. How should we respond? Explain



# Discussion

- Some people claim that Jesus never claimed Deity. What can we prove about Jesus' claims in verse 24?
- What did Jesus say was the source of His teaching?
- Where else have we read about Jesus being "lifted up"? What does the expression mean?
- Define "disciple" based on verse 31. Explain what one must do to be a true disciple.



# Discussion

- In what sense does truth make us free? Does freedom mean we may do as we please? Explain and name some other ways people mistakenly pursue freedom
- What do Satan's children do? Do Satan's followers generally worship and acknowledge him directly? What does this show about Satan's normal strategy
- Whom did the Jews claim as their Father, and how did Jesus prove they were mistaken?



# Discussion



- Note the expression “I AM.” List an Old Testament passage where God used this expression for Himself. Explain its significance.
- How did the Jews understand Jesus’ statement I AM?
- What options does this leave us as far as forming an opinion on who Jesus is?