

Christ, in responding to the Pharisees attack on His credibility, informed them He knew where He was from and He knew where He was going. Up to this point Jesus has answered three questions : John 7:14-24 "Where did Jesus go to school?" The answer - in heaven. The second question: John 7:25-32 "Where did Jesus come from?" The answer - Jesus came from heaven. And the third question John 7:33-36 was "Where is Jesus going?" The answer - Jesus is going to heaven.

Is Jesus a credible witness? Absolutely! He is a credible witness because He had come from heaven and was going to heaven. He is therefore in a perfect position to testify to the fact that He is the light of the world. Obviously, the same thing could not be said about the Pharisees. They were totally ignorant about what they had testified.

John 8:14. "Jesus answered and said to them, 'Even if I bear witness of Myself, My witness is true; for I know where I came from, and where I am going; but you do not know where I come from, or where I am going.'

Christ's statement about the ignorance of the Pharisees was not designed to strengthen His credibility but rather to weaken the credibility of the Pharisee's ability to render an informed judgment. John 8:15. "You people judge according to the flesh."

The Pharisees' knowledge of Christ is limited to "His flesh," His human appearance. Their ignorance, therefore, rendered them incapable of making sound judgments in respect to Christ, to who He really was.

The problem with these Pharisees was that they were making a judgment on spiritual realities and truth, such as whether or not Jesus was the light of the world, on the basis of their five senses. They were, in effect, saying, "When we look at Jesus, we see a man who is about 5' 11" tall, weighs about 170 lbs, who is not particularly attractive and is poor." It was all that they could have seen without supernatural intervention. Therefore, they did not understand Jesus' heavenly origin and destination and were therefore unable to judge Him. "You people judge according to the flesh; I am not judging anyone."

What does He mean by this? Does He mean that He is only concerned about preaching a message of salvation rather than passing judgment on people like the Pharisees are doing? This is highly unlikely in light of the fact that Jesus, throughout His life, continually passed judgment on the Pharisees. If He did not mean that He did not, in an absolute sense, practice judgment, what did He in fact mean?

When Jesus says that I am not judging anyone, He meant that He did not judge anyone the way His opponents did based on unsound information.

John 8:16, "But even if I do judge, my judgment is true." When Jesus exercises judgment, He does not judge superficially according to the flesh. He knows everything that there is to be known, and therefore, all of His judgments are true.

John 8:16, "But even if I do judge, my judgment is true; for I am not alone in it, but I and He who sent Me." In John 8:16, Jesus went from defending Himself as a credible witness to promoting Himself as a credible judge by virtue of the fact that He was not alone in His judgments. When Jesus passes judgment, whether in the course of His earthly life or in respect to the judgments that are yet to come, those judgments are a perfect reflection of the very judgments of God since Christ does nothing that He does not see His Father doing first, according to John 5:30.

This comment by Jesus, concerning His credibility as a judge, was only incidental to the flow of this passage and was only elicited because the Pharisees, in mishandling the teaching of Deuteronomy 17:6 and Deuteronomy 19:15, had judged Jesus unfairly and incorrectly. Therefore, after briefly contrasting His genuine judging with the illegitimate judging of the Pharisees, Jesus reverted to the main issue in John 8:17-18.

In John 8:13 that He now reverts to in John 8:17-18, was the legal competency of His testimony regarding Himself. The law required in a legal proceeding, more than one witness saying the same thing in order for the testimony to be considered true.

John 8:17, "Even in your law it has been written, that the testimony of two men is true." Jesus, in this statement, refers to the very same legal requirement that the

Pharisees had earlier unfairly used to condemn His testimony as untrue. But in contrast to the Pharisees, He applied the truth contained in the Law correctly and, in doing so, confirmed His testimony about Himself as true. So who is this second witness that Christ adds to His own credible testimony?

John 8:18, "I am He who bears witness of Myself, and the Father who sent Me bears witness of Me." How had the Father bore witness to the claims of Christ?

The Father bore witness to Christ through the miracles He had given His Son to perform according to John 5:36 and also through the Scriptures which testified of Jesus according to John 5:39.

Based on the credible testimony of two witnesses, the Father and the Son's (Christ's) testimony, that He was the light of the world, was true. So what is the problem? Why weren't the Pharisees able to see this spiritual truth?

The problem is not evidence. The problem is that man, being so totally corrupted by the fall, lacks the capacity to exercise spiritual discernment in things pertaining to God unless God supernaturally intervenes. And in the case of these Pharisees, this has not happened. We once again see the reality of this as the Pharisees once again choose to respond by delivering another very hard-hitting statement. What is this second statement? John 8:19, "And so they were saying to Him, 'Where is Your Father?'"

Things have gone from bad to worse. Earlier, when they had rejected Christ's claim that He was the light of the world, they at least tried to appear reasonable by appealing to the biblical principle of multiple witnesses. But here they are not even close to being reasonable.

They want Jesus to produce His Father, the one who is bearing witness of Him, so that they might interrogate Him. And who had Christ been declaring His Father to be? Christ had been declaring that His Father was God. They were therefore in effect asking Jesus to produce God so that they might interrogate Him. They are being absurd and are treating Christ with total disdain.

These Pharisees are blind to the truth concerning Christ, because they were spiritually dead and were totally incapable of seeing spiritual truth. Jesus' response is " 'You know neither Me, nor My Father; if you knew Me, you would know My Father also.'"

So how will these Pharisees and others listening to Christ respond to all that He has said including His 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."

The totality of what Jesus had said including His warning was so compelling that the apostle tells us that many came to believe in Jesus as the Christ.

We don't know who these "many" people were and He doesn't get particularly excited about their belief. In fact, He does something that might be considered rather surprising.

Jesus responded to these many so-called professions of faith by exposing them as superficial (John 8:31-59). In other words, Jesus will expose these professions as false. He will do this incrementally starting in John 8:31 going all the way down to John 8:59. His first step in this process is to explain to them what characterizes the life of someone who has made a genuine profession of faith (John 8:31-36).

**John 8:31 "Jesus therefore was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, 'If you abide in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine.'"**

Those making genuine professions of faith will abide in the Word of Christ or in other words they will persevere in the Word of Christ.

But someone might ask, "But what exactly does Christ mean when He speaks of abiding or persevering in His word?" From the context of John 8:31-59 abiding or persevering in His Word implies obedience. In other words abiding or persevering in His word does not mean that we throughout the course of our lives will simply acknowledge the truthfulness of His words. Abiding or persevering in Christ's word means that our lives will be characterized by who and what it says we are. We will be seen as obeying because of who we are, not obeying to be something we are not.

Perseverance in the things of Christ, regardless of failing along the way, is proof of a genuine conversion. If struggles bring a total disregard for hungering and thirsting after righteousness and a saltless and lightless life, (Mt.5) there is no conversion.

John 8:32, "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free." Jesus tells us that the first thing that a true disciple of Christ will experience as they interact with His Word is this: They will know the truth. What exactly does this mean?

If we interact with Christ's Word as a true disciple, we know that Christ's word is truth, not in an academic sense but in an experiential sense (John 8:32). Christ's Word is alive for us. The written word shows us and the Living Word is Christ. We can find an example of this in 2 Thessalonians 2:13.

**2 Thessalonians 2:13 "And for this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God's message, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe."**

The word of Christ when it is received in the hearts of a true disciple will be received as the very Word of God. By the transforming work of the Holy Spirit it will accomplish God's work in us and show us how we show that work outwardly. True disciples interact with the Word of Christ... they know the truth who is Christ.

Those who come to know Christ's Word as truth, in a experiential sense, will also find that truth continually setting them free - John 8:32 "And you shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free."

Isn't this the inevitable consequence of what we have just discussed. If we, as a true disciple of Christ have come to know the truth in the way we have just described it, or in other words experientially in respect to its power, then of course knowing that truth will set us free initially and continually. Salvation comes from hearing the Word, the Gospel and the faith needed to hear it and act on it is a gift from God.

We are once and for all freed from the condemnation of sin and death and we continually are being set free for from all things that encumber us in growth in Christ,

remember, true believers persevere, move on mature in the grace and knowledge of Christ.

But how will those who had made these so-called professions of faith in John 8 respond? Will they be encouraged, uplifted and even challenged by the Words of Christ? Unfortunately, these Jewish folk struggled.

They struggled with Christ's teaching that the truth, not a warrior king, although He is and will be that, but not at that moment concerning their immediate Messianic hopes, would set them free - He is the Living truth of the written truth, and they miss it.

John 8:33, "We are Abraham's offspring, and have never yet been enslaved to anyone." Now isn't this a rather surprising statement? Considering their collective history, that they had been, over the centuries enslaved to just about every major national power.

Although Jesus' interrogators were never themselves slaves, their reference to Abraham shows that they understand Jesus as referring to the Jewish people as a whole. Jewish teachers generally acknowledged that their people had been subjected under the yoke of at least four kingdoms: Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome. But many teachers believed that these kingdoms were only servants of God, and that he would ultimately break the yokes of the other nations (an extreme form of this belief led to the revolt of A.D. 66-70). They taught that other nations were ruled by guardian angels and the stars but that Israel was ruled by God alone.

Philosophers often used "free" to mean free from false ideas or from concern; Judaism spoke of being free from sin. Jewish teachers believed that because Israel had the law, the evil impulse that made the Gentiles so sinful could not enslave them.

They were struggling with Christ's implication that they were in some kind of spiritual bondage and needed to be set free (John 8:33).

In other words these Jews were convinced that they were spiritually whole and did

not need a physician because of their genetic relationship to Abraham. They might be willing to accept the fact that Jesus is the Christ, but they are not willing to accept His teaching that they need to be set free.

So they ask Christ for an explanation at the end of John 8:33. "We are Abraham's offspring, and have never yet been enslaved to anyone, How is it that you say, 'You shall become free?'"

Jesus answered them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin.'" Those who sin are slaves to their sin, whether they realize it or not and this includes the physical offspring of Abraham. This had to be very difficult for them to hear.

Jesus explains slavery in his context and now progresses to the status of slaves in John 8:35-36.

"And the slave does not remain in the house forever; the Son does remain forever. (36) If therefore the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed."

Why is this contrast important? The Jews viewed themselves as sons in God's household because they were the physical offspring of Abraham. But they presumed wrongly. They were the physical offspring of Abraham, but they were not sons in God's household. The Jews were slaves. They were the slaves of sin and therefore did not have the rights of the son nor the security of the Son in God's household (John 8:35)

Therefore, though they might now be enjoying certain blessings because they are in fact the physical seed of Abraham, and are part of God's household as slaves, they should not assume that they will remain in the household of God and continue to enjoy the blessings of that household forever, since they in fact are not sons but slaves. What does Jesus tell them? "And the slave does not remain in the house."

But there is one who does remain in the house, "And the slave does not remain in the house forever; the son does remain forever." The son is Christ, and as the Son He permanently belongs to the household, or in other words the household of God (John

8:35). This fact can be extremely helpful to those who are slaves of sin.

**"If therefore the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed."**

Jesus not only enjoys inalienable rights as the unique Son of God, but He has the authority given to Him by His Father to liberate slaves (John 3:35). The Jews thought because they were the physical offspring of Abraham that they were sons in God's household. They were wrong. They were slaves of sin just as at one time we were the slaves of sin, and if nothing changed they would die in that condition and be internally separated from God.

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.

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.

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? They don't deny it. 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.

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.

**"Jesus said to them, 'If you are Abraham's children, do the deeds of Abraham.'**

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. The deeds of Abraham are revealed



to Isaac in Genesis 26:5. "Because Abraham obeyed Me and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes and My laws."

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 they obeying God?

Absolutely not! Rather than doing the deeds of Abraham, they were seeking to kill the very person God had sent to tell them the truth.

Jesus, in John 8:40, in the most emphatic terms tells these Jews, that Abraham was not their spiritual father and He says, John 8:41, "You are doing the deeds of your father."

Christ, 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."

So now they 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 in personal relationship to God on a personal level. Jesus gave three reasons to support this.

First of all, because they had failed to love the one who had been with God and who had been sent by God. 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.'" This brings us to the second reason. 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, 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.

**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."

There are two specific desires that Christ identifies, murder and their love of falsehood. 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.

Jesus now asks them a rhetorical question at the beginning of John 8:46. "Which one of you convicts Me of sin?" 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. "If I speak truth, why do you not believe Me?"

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."

The double charge in v 48 that Jesus was both a Samaritan and demon-possessed

revealed strong contempt on the part of his accusers. The former charge was probably expressing their hatred of Jesus in the same way as they regarded the Samaritans. The latter charge was more serious and arose from Jesus' words in v 44. In answer Jesus pointed out the absurdity of a demon-possessed person doing anything in the Father's honor, and he further pointed out that it was God who was the judge of the matter (50). This removed the discussion from the sphere of their opinion against that of Jesus- Jesus' view was backed up by God.

The words in v 51, he will never see death, should be understood in the sense of not experiencing the terrors of death as part of the promise of Jesus to give believers, eternal life. Once again, the opponents of Jesus misunderstood his words, taking the reference to death literally (52). The fact that Abraham and the prophets died made nonsense of Jesus' statement in their view. It is significant that they changed Jesus' word see to taste, which shows they understood Jesus to mean physical death. The direct question, Are you greater than our father Abraham? (53), implies that the Jews regarded this as impossible. They were willing to give greater honor to the prophets than to Jesus. The following question—Who do you think you are? is more literally 'Whom do you make yourself to be?' The answer to this is that Jesus did not glorify himself (54); it was the work of the Father. Once again Jesus claimed a special relationship to, and knowledge of, the Father (55) in contrast with his hearers.

In v 56 we have the remarkable statement Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day, which raises the question when this could have taken place. A Jewish tradition held that Abraham saw the secrets of the age to come. Some see the reference to Abraham rejoicing over the birth of Isaac (Gn. 17:17). This is possible, particularly if the birth of Isaac is seen as the promise of blessing to all nations (cf. Paul's interpretation of the promise in Rom. 4 and Gal. 3). This was supremely fulfilled in Christ. He saw it and was glad seems to point to Abraham's foresight, which resulted from his faith, although some have linked it to the binding of Isaac. The Jews distorted the words of Jesus by asking, "You are not yet fifty years old and you have seen

Abraham! “(57), but Jesus made an emphatic declaration in response. The words before Abraham was born point to pre-existence. The I am here, must be understood as a divine claim and was taken in this way by the Jews (59). In no more dramatic way could Jesus have claimed superiority over Abraham. The Jews could think of no other treatment but stoning for anyone so indisputably claiming pre-existence to Abraham. The fact that Jesus hid himself (John does not tell us how) goes to underline the constant theme in this gospel that his times were in God’s hands.

And that is the heart of the context of Jesus saying, “I am the light of the world.”

And sadly, in the end those who opposed Christ would have put out that Light had it been possible.