

John 8:31-59

Jews Versus Jesus?

Who is Jesus addressing here? They appear to be Jewish believers but as we shall see, their faith is revealed for what it is and/or what it is not and we see increasing hostility on the part of the leaders throughout this passage.

How would you describe their faith? Their faith is an incomplete, immature faith. They know nothing of the cross, the resurrection, the Holy Spirit, etc. They know Jesus as a miracle worker, and one who talks convincingly—even when He claims to be God. They know about Him but they don't know Him.

What does Jesus know about them? (See John 2:23-25.) He knows their hearts. They may believe what He says but, nevertheless, they don't commit or surrender themselves to Him. They only give intellectual assent—which is not saving faith. But saving faith may come from such beginnings. Therefore, Jesus speaks to those who only believe His teachings and tries to lead them deeper.

Verse 31 is one of many passages in the Gospels where Jesus teaches the conditions of discipleship.

How do you define a disciple? A student or follower

Application: Jesus is calling us to be His disciples, too. In this passage, Jesus gives us a picture of what a disciple looks like.

- **What should we be doing if we are His disciples?** Holding to the teaching of Jesus. Abiding in His Word.
- **How do we do that?** Read, study, meditate on His Word. Memorize Scripture. “I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you” (Psalm 119:11). The New Testament has 270 chapters. If you read one chapter per day, you will read through the New Testament in nine months.
- **What is at the heart of being a disciple?** The issue goes beyond the obedience that is expected of a Christian. Obedience is part of being in a right relationship with God. It confirms the relationship.

Verse 32 What does the truth set us free from? Slavery to sin, bondage to the law, ignorance, condemnation, eternal damnation, spiritual death. We are set free from three terrible masters: sin, self, and Satan.

What is the error of the Jews' statement in verse 33? The Jews were slaves to Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, and now Rome. During the period of the judges there are at least seven occasions when the nation fell under foreign rule.

Verse 34 What does it mean to be a slave to sin? Sin in this passage is in a Greek verb tense indicating a habitual, continual action, a lifestyle of sin rather than an occasional lapse.

Application: Can you see the people around you who are enslaved to sin?

- **What can set them free?** Jesus! The truth found in the Word of God.
- **Set free for what purpose?**
 - We are *to share* the good news with others. “Then Jesus came to them and said, ‘...Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them...and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.’” (Matthew 28:18-20).
 - We are set free *to serve* Jesus and others. We are now free to do what pleases God, which we could not formerly do with pure motives. “For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do” (Ephesians 2:10).

The Jews cling to their relationship with Abraham throughout this passage. What's their perspective on Abraham? Why is their relationship with him so important? God's promises were made to Abraham and to his descendants. Many of the Jews assume that their biological ancestry is the basis for their relationship with God. Put simply, they think being Jewish is the same as being saved. Being Jewish (a descendant of Abraham) is a privilege but it is not the same as being saved. God has no grandchildren. It doesn't matter who your ancestors are. The Jews couldn't piggy-back on Abraham's relationship with God. They make their religion a matter of race, rather than of faith.

The Jews dispute the issue of fatherhood with Jesus. Who do the Jews say is their father in verses 39 and 41? Both Abraham and God. They seem to be confused.

Who does Jesus say is their father? The devil (verse 44). This must come as a slap in the face. These people think they have the inside track with God, that they are “sons of God” as much as men can be. Now Jesus tells them otherwise. These are hard hitting words!

Another major point Jesus makes is that they are unable to hear. Why are they unable to hear? “You do not belong to God” (because they are rejecting the Messiah). They are blinded by prejudice, presuppositions, and hard hearts. Those who belong to God do listen and respond to God’s words. These people do not listen or respond because they do not belong to God. It’s as simple as that.

Note: In one sense every human being is a child of the devil since we all do the things that Satan does out of our sinful human nature. However the believer is also a child of God by faith in Jesus Christ. Consequently we are always either manifesting the traits of one of our spiritual fathers or the other. This is the result of walking either by the flesh or by the Spirit.

Application: We are surrounded by people just like this who are unable to hear—and enslaved to sin. Are we burdened for them? Are we praying for opportunities to speak into their lives? Are we praying for opportunities to engage our culture?

What is the intent of the Jews when they deny being illegitimate children? In the Jews’ mind, Jesus was illegitimate. They don’t know who the father of Jesus was—doubting that it was Joseph because Mary was pregnant before their marriage. They are implying that Jesus is the illegitimate child of Mary and some “unknown lover.”

Why do the Jews accuse Jesus of being a Samaritan in verse 48? It is their term for “scum of the earth.” Jesus is becoming more and more direct in His accusations against His opponents and they are quick to retaliate with ugly accusations.

Verse 52 is the second time Jesus is accused of being demon possessed. (See John 7:20) Why does the crowd think that? His words are confusing, don’t make sense, and don’t make people feel good.

Why are the Jews confused over the death issue? Jesus speaks of eternal death. The Jews interpret Jesus’ statements as referring to physical death.

Why do they pick up stones to kill Him? Because of His “I AM” statement. They know exactly what He means. Jesus is claiming to be God as boldly and emphatically as it can be done. They do not even appear to take the time to pronounce sentence upon Him. They spontaneously take up stones to stone Him on the spot. Stoning was the penalty for blasphemy

Note: If Jesus had only wanted to claim that He existed before Abraham, He could have said, “I was.” By saying, “I am,” He is not just claiming preexistence but deity.

MEMORIZE: John 8:31-32