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John 8:12 - 8:59



Gospel of John - Steve Gregg

In this talk, Steve Gregg explores John chapter 8, starting with the story of the woman taken in adultery and Jesus' declaration that he is the light of the world. He discusses Jesus' claim to be the Good Shepherd, the two meanings of walking in darkness, and the concept of sinning unto death. Gregg also examines Jesus' judgment and the idea of God's wrath in both the Old and New Testaments, as well as the importance of abiding in Jesus' words in order to know the truth and be set free.

Transcript

Last time we looked at the beginning of John chapter 8, which has that story of the woman taken in adultery. And I've mentioned that many scholars, perhaps most scholars, believe that that is not in its original setting there. Most manuscripts, well, most manuscripts have it there, but the manuscripts that are most respected by scholars do not have it there.

But some of them have it elsewhere. Some of them have it positioned in Luke, in chapter 21, and some have it in other locations. But most scholars seem to agree that the passage is an authentic story, whether or not it was originally in this setting, or perhaps it was in another setting at another time.

But we covered that up through verse 11 last time. And so we pick up chapter 8 at verse 12. Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, I am the light of the world.

He who follows me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. The Pharisees therefore said to him, You bear witness of yourself. Your witness is not true.

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 and where I am going. You judge according to the flesh.

I judge no one. And yet if I do judge, my judgment is true. For I am not alone, but I am with the Father who sent me.

It is also written in your law that the testimony of two men is true. I am one who bears witness of myself, and the Father who sent me bears witness of me. Now let's stop there a moment.

He began by saying, I am the light of the world, which in some respects could sound blasphemous. Now they didn't take up stones to stone him on this occasion. But it was a controversial statement to say.

Even as later on, in John chapter 10, when he said, I am the good shepherd. The reason that it would be controversial is because in the Old Testament, these are terms that Yahweh used for himself. I mean, as far as the shepherd goes in Psalm 23, David said, Yahweh is my shepherd.

I shall not want. And also God said in Ezekiel chapter 37, that the time would come when he would replace with himself the bad shepherds who had mistreated Israel. And he said, I will shepherd my flock.

So when Jesus came and said, I am the good shepherd. He's actually taking upon himself an identity, which the Old Testament gave to Yahweh. Now here also when Jesus said, I am the light of the world.

In Psalm 27, 1, David said, Yahweh is my light and my salvation. Whom shall I fear? Yahweh is the light of the world. Yahweh is the one who is identified that way in the Old Testament and also in the new.

Because in 1 John chapter 1 in verse 5, John said, this is the message which we have heard of him and declared to you that God is light. And in him is no darkness at all. So God is the one who is light.

Yahweh is the one who is my light and my salvation. And so Jesus now says, I am the light of the world. Now there's another sense in which the Old Testament spoke of the light of the world.

And that was as the servant of Yahweh. If you have ever studied Isaiah, and most Christians really probably have not had occasion to do so. Although I'm sure you've read it.

The students of Isaiah have discovered that there are several, four I believe, songs. That feature a character that the scholars call the servant of Yahweh. Because that's what Isaiah calls him.

The servant of Yahweh. The servant of Jehovah. The servant of the Lord.

And there are a number of sections of Isaiah that depict this character called the servant of Yahweh. Now we Christians identify this as Jesus. He is the servant of Yahweh.

And in fact, the most famous chapter in Isaiah, chapter 53, is one of these servant songs as they call them. And he's the one who was bruised for our transgressions and wounded for our iniquities and so forth. And all those things that we know to be about Jesus crucified.

Those actually exist in one of the several servant songs. Which we would say are about the Messiah. Many of the Jewish rabbis believed the servant of Yahweh was the Messiah also.

Modern Jews would say the servant of Yahweh in Isaiah is Israel. And there's reasons for that. Because sometimes the servant is spoken of as if it is Israel.

But there's times when the servant is spoken in a way that could not be Israel. For example, in Isaiah chapter 49 and verse 6. This is one of those servant songs. In verse 3, he said to me, you are my servant, O Israel.

So it sounds like he's talking to Israel. And yet, it says in verse 6, indeed he says, it is too small a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and restore the preserved ones of Israel. I will also give you as a light to the Gentiles that you may be my salvation to the ends of the earth.

Now this cannot really apply to the nation Israel as the servant. Although the servant is called Israel in verse 3. The servant seems to have morphed into somebody who will raise up Israel. It's not that Israel would raise up Israel.

But the servant will raise up Israel and Jacob and the Gentiles and be a light to the Gentiles. So that you should be my salvation to the ends of the earth. And so, the servant of Yahweh is to be the light to the Gentiles, the light of the world.

And when Jesus said, I am the light of the world, this would of course to the Jewish mind convey all these Old Testament ideas. Yahweh and the servant of Yahweh are said to be the light. Yahweh is the light.

The servant is the light to the Gentiles. Jesus is essentially identifying with this servant of Yahweh who is also Yahweh. Just like the angel of Yahweh in the Old Testament is Yahweh.

These expressions are divine titles. And when Jesus made this statement about himself, he said he is the light of the world. He says, he that follows me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.

Now, walking in darkness has two meanings that are developed in 1 John. One of them is that walking in darkness means you are hiding. You are in the shadows.

You are not coming to the light because you don't want your deeds to be exposed. John

chapter 3 also talks this way. Jesus said this is the condemnation that light has come into the world, but men love darkness rather than light, lest their deeds should be exposed.

But he that does the truth comes to the light that his deeds might be shown to be done in God. So, coming to the light or remaining in the darkness, walking in darkness means you are kind of concealing yourself. And you don't want someone to see what you are doing.

That is one sense in which a person walks in darkness. Another is that they walk, if you are walking in light, you are walking with illumination so you are not going to trip and fall. You are not going to be in trouble.

As it says in 1 John chapter 2, it says in verse 11, 1 John 2.11, But he who hates his brother is in darkness, and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes. So, a person walking in darkness, there are two aspects to it that John brings out. One is that the person who walks in darkness is staying where he cannot be seen easily by others.

Secondly, he is walking in a place where he cannot see where he is going either. He stumbles because he cannot see where he is going. And so Jesus says, if you walk in me, if you walk in the light, I am the light of the world.

He says, you will not walk in darkness, you will not stumble, you will know where to go, and you will not be concealing your behavior, because you will not be doing things that you will be ashamed to have people know about. And he says, that is true if you follow me. Whoever follows me shall not walk in darkness.

Now, how does a person follow Jesus? Obviously, when Jesus came to the fishermen and said, follow me, that meant they would leave what they were doing and go where he was going with them. In Galilee, when Jesus would call somebody to follow him, or invite somebody to follow him, that meant, I am going somewhere, stay close, go where I am going, walk behind me. But, obviously, ever since Jesus has left, he isn't just in one spot.

You can't just go from one geographical spot to another and be following Jesus that way, because Jesus is everywhere. He is omnipresent. And so, following Jesus has more of the meaning of following his example, doing what he said to do, following his teaching, and basically imitating and obeying Christ, and of course, following his leading as he gives instruction, because he is the shepherd and we are the sheep.

So, anyway, following him, as we follow what Jesus taught, as we follow his example, as we follow his guidance in our lives, we will have the light of life. And when he said this about himself, the Pharisees jumped on it immediately and said, well, now you are testifying to yourself, therefore your testimony is not true. Now, why would they say that? Well, back in chapter 5, Jesus himself had said in chapter 5, verse 31, if I bear

witness to myself, my witness is not true.

And so, they are just saying the same thing, you are bearing witness to yourself, your witness isn't true. But, back in chapter 5, when Jesus said that, it is clear from what Jesus went on to say, that he is saying that if I alone bear witness to myself, and if no other does, then you have no reason to believe my witness is true. Because the law said, in the mouth of two or more witnesses, every word shall be established.

That was in the context of court cases. That was in the context of actually condemning somebody for murder. That it would take two witnesses to condemn a person to death for the crime of murder.

And every word would be established in a court of law by having two or more witnesses. No one could be condemned on the testimony of one person. And so, that was understood to be applicable to many other situations.

Actually, Jesus applied it in Matthew 18. When he said, if your brother sins against you, in verse 15, he said, when your brother sins against you, go to him alone, and if you can win him between yourselves, that's great, it's over. You've won your brother, no further problem needs to exist.

But he said, if he doesn't hear you, then go with two or more others. That in the mouth of two or three witnesses, every word shall be established, Jesus said. So, when you're going to confront somebody who's sinning and not repenting, he said, if it doesn't work just to speak to them privately, then let it be established by the mouth of two or more witnesses.

So, Jesus picks up that idea from the Old Testament, which applies to court cases, and applies it to a situation of church discipline. And, in fact, this principle, in the mouth of two or more witnesses, shall every word be established, in one form or another, it's quoted or used five times in the New Testament. So, it's a very common and established principle, both in the Old and the New Testament.

Now, when Jesus said in John 5, 31, if I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true, he's not really saying that he's lying because he's saying these things about himself. He's saying, if you have only my witness and no other, then you have no reason to believe that what I'm telling you is true. That's really what his statement means, and he continues on after verse 31 of chapter 5 to say, there's another that bears witness of me.

And he mentions John the Baptist bears witness of Jesus, and the Father, and the works he does, and the scriptures themselves bear witness of him. He goes on through the end of chapter 5, listing all the different witnesses that exist to testify that he is who he says he is. But he does not deny that he bears witness of himself also, it's just that he is one of the witnesses for himself, there are others.

And likewise here, when they say, you bear witness of yourself, your witness is not true, Jesus corrects them. He says first of all in chapter 8, verse 14, he 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'm going. But you do not know where I come from and where I'm going, so first of all, my witness is true because I have knowledge of what I'm talking about.

I know where I'm from, I know who I am. You don't know who I am or where I'm from, and therefore if it came to have a dispute between you and me about who I am, my witness is more reliable than yours, because I know something that you don't know. And so in any contest, the person who has an experience or who knows something is in a stronger position than the person who doesn't know something.

A person who says they're an agnostic is saying they don't know if there's a God. Well, how many things would you have to know to know if there was no God? You'd obviously have to know everything to know that there's no God, because you might know a lot of things and there might be God outside the realm of the things you know. The only way you could be sure that there's no God is if you knew everything in the universe and you knew that among all the things in the universe there wasn't a God.

You can't know that. In other words, a person who doesn't claim to know God is in a weak position. All they can do is plead ignorance.

But one person who actually knows God is in a stronger position than the person who doesn't claim to know God. It's not like they're on equal footing. Well, you say you know God, I say I don't know God.

It's a draw. Well, not exactly. The two testimonies are not on equal footing.

If someone says, I don't know about this, and someone says, well, I do. I have some experience with this. Then the person who has some experience is obviously in a stronger position than the person who's ignorant.

And he's saying to them, my witness is true because I know something and you don't know it. I know where I'm from. I know who I am.

You don't know these things. And therefore, you would be unwise to discount my testimony just because I'm the one giving it. Then he goes on to say, I'm not the only one who gives it.

As he's already pointed out back in chapter 5, there are other witnesses besides himself. He said in verse 15, you judge according to the flesh. I judge no one.

And yet if I do judge, my judgment is true for I'm not alone, but I am with the Father who sent me. Now, he said, I do not judge anyone. And that's in the present tense.

I am not judging anyone. Of course, he will judge. The Bible indicates that when Jesus returns, he will sit on the throne of judgment and he will judge the world.

And we will actually sit with him and we will judge angels and we'll judge the world, Paul said in 1 Corinthians 6, along with Jesus. Jesus is the one who will sit and judge. In fact, in chapter 5, Jesus had said that all judgment has been committed to him by the Father.

Because Jesus is the Son of Man. In John 5, verse 27, he said, and God has given the Son of Man, author of authority, to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of Man. In the book of Revelation, there is a scroll that's sealed with seven seals in the hand of the one who sits on the throne.

And in that case, the one on the throne is the Father. And it is the judgment that must be executed. The scroll has to be opened in order for the sentence to be read and executed.

But no one is worthy. A loud voice goes through heaven and earth and says, who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll? And initially, no one is found who is worthy. And John weeps, he says, he wept bitterly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to loose its seals.

And then an elder said to him, don't weep. The lion of the tribe of Judah has prevailed to break the seals and open the scroll. And then Jesus is seen there as the one who is worthy.

Who is worthy? It's not who is able. You see, breaking wax seals on a document is not that difficult. But if you aren't the one who is authorized to break them, then you can't do it.

Usually a document is sealed by some authority, a high authority. And not just everyone is allowed to break those seals. Anyone could do it.

Wax is not that resistant to breaking. A child could break them, but wouldn't be worthy to. Who is authorized to break the seals? And Jesus was the only one who was authorized or worthy to be the executor of that judgment.

In Revelation as we see. Likewise, Jesus says in John chapter 5 verse 27 that God has committed all judgment to Jesus because he is the son of man. And so when Jesus says, I judge no one, he doesn't mean that he will never judge anyone.

He is talking about his present activity. I am judging no one. You know, this is illustrated in his interaction with the woman who was taken in adultery.

In fact, some people think that this statement, I am judging no one, is one evidence that the story of the woman taken in adultery actually belongs in this context. Because Jesus said, there were your accusers. And she said, no, there are none, Lord.

And he said, neither do I condemn you. I'm not judging you either. Go and sin no more.

In any case, Jesus didn't come to be critical. He didn't come to judge the world. He came to save the world.

And therefore, he says, I'm not judging anyone. And yet if I do judge, if I make a judgment, and he will do that. He says, my judgment is a righteous judgment.

I'm not judging according to the flesh or toward natural or surface considerations. He could judge what's in the heart because he can do that because he's not alone. He has, as the one informing him, the Father.

And he says in verse 17, it is also written in your law that the testimony of two men is true. I am one who bears witness of myself and the Father who sent me bears witness of me. So, that's why he said back in verse 14, even if I bear witness of myself, my witness is true.

For two reasons. One is I know what I'm talking about and you don't know. Secondly, I'm not alone.

My Father also bears witness with me. That makes two witnesses and that should be enough. Then they said to him in verse 19, where is your Father? In other words, we don't see him here bearing witness to you.

Where is this Father you're talking about? Where is this second witness? And they said to him, where is your Father? And Jesus answered, you know neither me nor my Father. If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. Now, Jesus actually said this same thing to his disciples a little later in the Gospel of John.

In John chapter 14, when he's in the upper room with them. In verse 7, he's with the disciples in the upper room. He says, if you had known me, you would have known my Father also.

The very same line he said to his enemies. But he said to them in verse 7, John 14, 7, but from now on, you know him and have seen him. If you had known me, you would have known the Father.

But now you know him and you've seen him. And Philip said to him, Lord, show us the Father and it's sufficient for us. And Jesus said to him, have I been with you so long and yet you have not known me, Philip.

He who has seen me has seen the Father. And so how can you say, show us the Father? So, to know Jesus is to know God. If one wonders what God is like, he is like Jesus.

And if one wonders what God was like in the Old Testament times, well, he doesn't change. He was like Jesus then too. When people say, I don't understand why God is so,

you know, wrathful in the Old Testament and so nice in the New Testament.

Well, you must be reading it wrong because God doesn't change. And the God that's in the Old Testament is the God who Jesus refers to as his Father. And he says, if you've seen me, you've seen the Father.

The Father is just like me. Now, what is Jesus like? Well, he is merciful. He is gracious.

But he is also a God who judges. The book of Revelation, again, is a book about Jesus judging. And the people of the earth say to the mountains and the hills, fall on us and cover us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb.

Jesus is the Lamb. And so Jesus is a judging God, just as he is in the Old Testament. He judges.

But he is also a merciful God, as he was in the Old Testament. Many times we have the impression that Jesus is not a true picture of the Old Testament God because we see so many instances of God judging in the Old Testament. Judging people.

Well, he judges people in the New Testament too, by the way. In the Old Testament, we see Uzzah reaching out his hand to stabilize the ark and the anger of the Lord flashes toward him and he dies. Or we see Nadab and Abihu, the two sons of Aaron, going into the temple or the tabernacle bringing the wrong incense and fire from the Lord comes out and consumes them.

That's God in the Old Testament. In the New Testament, we see Herod in Acts chapter 12 speaking in such a way as to bring divine honors upon himself and says the angel of the Lord smote him and he was eaten with worms and died. That sounds not very much different than Uzzah's death, except a little more gruesome.

We see Ananias and Sapphira lying to the Holy Spirit and God strikes them dead, just like he did Nadab and Abihu. In the New Testament, God is no different than in the Old Testament. In the book of Revelation, it's Christ's wrath, it's Christ's judgment.

Christ is a God of judgment. Why? Because he's the same God that made us. The same God that revealed himself to a lesser degree in the Old Testament and more clearly in the New, through Christ.

Jesus said, if you know me, you know my Father. You don't know my Father or me, so that's your problem. You know neither me nor my Father.

Verse 19, he says, if you had known me, you would have known my Father also. These words, Jesus spoke in the treasury, which was a place in the temple. As he taught in the temple, and no one laid hands on him, for his hour had not yet come.

This theme we've seen already twice before, in chapter 7, verses 30 and 44. In chapter

7, verse 30, it said, then they sought to take him, but no one laid hand on him, because his hour had not yet come. Also in chapter 7, verse 44, it says, now some of them wanted to take him, but no one laid hands on him.

This is not the last time we're going to read of this either. It'll happen again in chapter 8, verse 59. They took up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out through the temple and passed by.

Over in chapter 10 also, in verse 39, it says, therefore they sought again to seize him, but he escaped out of their hand. So, when it's not his time to go, he's hard to catch. He's hard to get.

At this time, it doesn't say they tried, but it indicates that they probably would have liked to. It says, no one laid hands on him, for his hour had not yet come. Apparently they wanted to, but were unable to do so for some reason.

Then Jesus said to them again, I am going away, and you will seek me, and you will die in your sins. Where I go, you cannot come. So the Jew said, will he kill himself, because he says, where I go, you cannot come.

And he said to them, you are from beneath, I am from above. You are of this world, I am not of this world. Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins, for if you do not believe that I am he, you will die in your sins.

And they said to him, who are you? And Jesus said to them, just what I have been saying to you from the beginning. I have many things to say and to judge concerning you. He who sent me is true, and I speak to the world those things which I heard from him.

They did not understand that he spoke to them of the Father. Then Jesus said to them, when you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself, but as the Father taught me, I speak these things. And he who sent me is with me, the Father who has not left me alone, for I always do the things that please him.

Now, twice here Jesus speaks of them dying in their sins. In verse 21, he said, I am going away, and you will seek me, and you will die in your sins. And likewise in verse 24, therefore I said to you, that you will die in your sins.

Now, dying in your sins, I guess there are two places you can be when you die. You can either be in your sins, or you can be in Christ. And of course, if you are in Christ, there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ.

It says in Romans 8.1. So, this is the tragedy. Not that a person dies, but that they die in their sins. Because then they do not die in Christ.

And to die in your sins means you must face judgment for your sins. You die still in

bondage to your sins. And that is what he said is going to be their problem.

They are going to keep sinning until they die, unless they come to believe in him. They are sinning now. They are in sin.

But he is saying the tragedy is you are going to stay there until you die. And you are going to die in that condition unless you come around and see who I am and believe in me. Over in 1 John, the same author of course, in 1 John chapter 5, gave this teaching that has disturbed many people because it is difficult to understand.

At least most people find it so. In 1 John 5.16 and 17. 1 John 5.16 says, If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin which does not lead to death.

Notice how many italicized words there are here. Which means they are not in the Greek. Essentially, it says, If anyone sees his brother sin a sin not to death.

He will ask and he will give him life for those who commit sin not to death. There is a sin to death. I do not say that he should pray for that.

All unrighteousness is sin and there is a sin not to death. Not to death. Sinning not to death.

Or sinning to death. If you see your brother sin and he hasn't sinned to death. Pray for him.

Ask God to show mercy to him and God can save the one who has not yet sinned to death. But he says there is such a thing as sinning to death. If someone has done that, I don't say you should pray for him.

So John seems to be saying there is something called sinning to death. If someone does that, I don't recommend that you pray for him. But if someone does not sin to death, then you should pray for him.

Now, it seems that most commentators and many readers believe that when John speaks about sinning to death or in the King James says sinning unto death, that this is referring to a particular sin. That this is an identifiable sin. That once you commit it, you are done.

Once you commit it, you have committed the unpardonable sin. And there is only one other place in the Bible that seems to talk about such things. Well, two because it is paralleled in the other gospels.

But on one occasion Jesus spoke about people who blaspheme the Holy Spirit. How that they will have no forgiveness in this age or the age to come. So many commentators think that John is talking about that particular sin.

That if you blaspheme the Holy Spirit, you have sinned to death. On the other hand, it

has been historically difficult for people to be able to identify with certainty what blasphemy of the Holy Spirit looks like or is what it is. Many people who have probably not committed that crime have thought they have.

And very probably those who have, have often been insensitive to the fact that they have. How would we even know if somebody we have seen sinning has sinned to death or not? If we are talking about some kind of nebulous, difficult to define sin, how do we know if we are supposed to pray for them or not? If you are not supposed to pray for those who have sinned to death, but do pray for those who haven't, how can you know if somebody has done that or not? Well, I personally don't see the passage that way. I see the passage talking about sinning to physical death.

What would it mean to sin unto death? Well, what does it mean to be faithful unto death? Scripture talks about in Revelation 2.10 how the church of Smyrna is to be faithful unto death. What does that mean? Be faithful until you lose your salvation? No, it means to be faithful until you have died. Be faithful for your entire life and be faithful then until the point of your death.

Now, what if we use that phrase that way here? A person who sins unto death would be a person who continues their life of sin until they die. If somebody has continued their life of sin, that is, they have not repented, they have not come to Christ, and they are dead now, don't bother praying for them. They are not in purgatory, you can't get them out.

If they have sinned unto death, don't bother praying for them. But if you see a person sinning but they haven't sinned unto death, that means they are still alive. Pray for them, there is still hope.

Anyone who is sinning as long as they are still alive might repent. And John is basically saying intercede for somebody who is not dead yet and who is still in sin. Because otherwise they will die in sin.

And once they have died in sin, you can't really help them with your prayers anymore. Now, in John chapter 8, Jesus says that these people are in danger of dying in their sins. But he doesn't say that they will necessarily die in their sins.

He sounds like he is saying it in verse 21. He says, I am going away and you will seek me and you will die in your sins. Where I go you cannot come.

But he clarifies that. He says that is conditional. In verse 24, Therefore I say to you, you will die in your sins.

For if you do not believe that I am he, you will die in your sins. This is conditional. He is not predicting, it is a certainty.

In fact, there may well have been some in that crowd who were in sin when he spoke,

but who at a later date repented and came to him, maybe in the book of Acts or at some other point. He is not predicting that all these people are going to sin unto death and die in their sins. But he is saying that if they don't believe that he is who he says he is, they will.

Now, I say he is who he says he is because in verse 24, the statement, I am he, is in the Greek, is *ego eimi*, which literally means I am. You will notice the word he is in italics in verse 24, which means it is not in the Greek. The same is true of the phrase, the same phrase in verse 28.

He says, Then you will know that I am he. Actually, the he is in italics. In Greek, it is *ego eimi*.

Ego, E-G-O, we would say ego. It is the Greek word for I. That is why Freud used it to speak of part of the human personality, the ego. And then he had the super ego, what is above I. Ego is the Greek word for I, like the letter I, me.

And *eimi* is a word that means I am. You could say I am simply by saying *eimi*. You don't need the ego part.

Just the word *eimi* by itself. It is spelled E-I-M-I, E-I-M-I, *eimi*. That word by itself means I am.

But if you prefix it with the word ego, *ego eimi*, it literally means I, I am. But it is simply an emphatic way of saying I am. We know that Jesus is going to use that phrase again at the end of this chapter.

When he says in verse 58, Most assuredly I say to you, before Abram was I am. Again, that is *ego eimi*. This time they translate it without the he.

Now it is the same in all three places. And therefore, just keep that in mind. Because when we get to verse 58, I want to talk to you about what that implies from the Old Testament usage.

It is not what you think. Almost all Christians say, well, he is referring back to the burning bush when God, when Moses said, what is your name? And God says, I am. Well, actually I believe that he is actually referring to something else in the Old Testament than that.

But we will see later on. But suffice it to say that *ego eimi* is used in verse 24, it is used in verse 28, and it is used in verse 58. But, understand that although *ego eimi* literally means I am he, excuse me, I am.

It also is the only normal way to say I am he. In other words, sometimes the phrase *ego eimi* has an implied he that isn't in it. *Ego eimi* is the normal way to say I am he as well as I am.

So, context would decide for us. For example, if you look at chapter 9 of John, and verse 9, when the blind man has been healed, and people are speculating about whether this is the same man as had been formerly blind, in John 9, some said this is he. Others said he is like him.

He said ego eimi. I am he. So, we can see that the blind man says exactly the same words Jesus says, which should give us pause about thinking that ego eimi must mean I am without the he.

Now, this is confusing right now, and I plan to make that less confusing once we get to verse 58. I just want to point out that we have that phrase here in these two places. And I will say this, even before I get to verse 58, that when Jesus used this phrase I am he, he was in fact using an Old Testament name for Yahweh.

But we'll say more about that later. Now, earlier Jesus had said I'm going away and where I go you cannot come. And you might remember at that time that people speculated and said what? Is he going to go to the Greeks and teach the Greeks? That was in chapter 7, verses 34 and 35.

He said you will seek me and not find me, where I go you cannot come. The Jews then said among themselves where does he intend to go that we shall not find him? Does he intend to go to the dispersion among the Greeks and teach the Greeks? That was their first theory. Then when he made the same prediction that he's going away where they cannot come, this time they say what's he talking about? Is he going to kill himself? Verse 22, chapter 8 verse 22.

So we see that they're having a real hard time understanding what Jesus is saying. They're not understanding him. Even when he spoke about his father in verse 26, the next verse says they did not understand that he spoke to them of the father.

Now it seems to me that even, of course it's hard to know how much we would understand if we were in their shoes. Because we do have the New Testament. We do have the familiarity with Jesus talking about his father.

But it seems to me after all that he had said at this point, when he says my father they would know who he's talking about. But they're acting like they don't know. They don't seem to understand.

Their eyes seem to be blinded. In verse 28, and Jesus said to them when you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am, that egoi me, and that I do nothing of myself. But as my father taught me, I speak these things.

Now when you lifted up the Son of Man, this expression is found elsewhere in the Gospel of John and only in John. It's uniquely found in John. And it's always, I believe, always Jesus using the term of himself.

That he will be lifted up. We're perhaps more familiar with the more famous line where he says, I, if I be lifted up, I will draw all men unto me. And John tells us that he used this phrase to predict the means by which he would die.

In other words, being lifted up means lifted up on a cross. I remember there was a song very, very popular among charismatics back in the 60s. And it was lift Jesus higher, lift Jesus higher, lift him up for the world to see.

He said, if I be lifted up from the earth, I will draw men to me. And the term was being used as if it meant exalt Jesus, you know, lift Jesus higher. In fact, of course, the term means crucify him.

So, kind of an awkward message to that song. But basically he says, when you've lifted up the Son of Man, when you've crucified me, then you'll know that I am he. Now, I'm not sure how he means this.

Because obviously some of them did not come to faith after he was crucified. But on the other hand, some of them did. We know that after he was crucified and the Spirit was poured out at Pentecost, 3,000 people, perhaps many of them may have been in this crowd that he was talking to now.

Many of them came to believe in him and recognize who he was after that. That must be how he means it. He certainly is not predicting that all of them would.

Verse 29, and he who sent me is with me. The Father has not left me alone, for I always do the things that please him. So, no matter what Jesus does, he's always doing what pleases the Father.

And therefore, the Father is always happy with him and will never abandon him. Except, perhaps, when he's on the cross. And even that, he was pleasing his Father.

But it pleased the Lord to bruise him, it says in Isaiah 53. It pleased God to actually abandon him, apparently, at that moment. Now, it says in verse 30, as he spoke these words, many believed in him, but what kind of believing? We'll find out.

Remember, John many times speaks about people who believe in him, but Jesus doesn't believe in them. Remember in John chapter 2, it says, when he was at the feast, many believed in him because of the miracles, but he didn't commit himself to them because he knew it was in him. They believed in him, but it didn't seem like he believed in them.

And here we read of many believing in him, and he turns and puts these people to the test. And he says, he turned to those Jews who believed him and said, if you abide in my word, you are my disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

Now, he's talking to people who have believed him, but apparently not believed him in a deep and abiding way. They've been positively impressed with what he says. They're starting to think he's telling the truth.

But he's saying, I'm not really sure you're my disciples indeed. You might be acting like your disciples now. You might be impressed right at the moment.

But only if you abide. The word abide means remain or continue. If you continue in my words, if you remain in my words, then you really are my disciples.

Not just if you think so at the moment, but if you actually walk permanently, walk continuously in my words. And his words will be, of course, the things he teaches. So, a disciple is a person who is someone who takes Jesus' words as their rule of life, really.

That's why in Matthew 28, when Jesus gives the Great Commission, and he says, go and make disciples. Well, what's a disciple? Jesus said, those who continue in my words, they're my disciples. Jesus later tells his disciples, go and make disciples of all nations.

And then he says, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. That's how you make a disciple. You teach them to observe everything Jesus commanded.

Why? Because that's what a disciple is. Someone who continues in what Jesus said. Doing what he commanded.

Obedying him. Jesus said, why do you call me Lord, Lord, and you don't do the things I say? To be a disciple of Jesus means he's your Lord, he's your Rabbi, he's your teacher. He's the one that you follow, you obey.

And if you don't continue in his words, then you're not really disciples at all. So, a real Christian, because by the way, the word Christian and disciple are interchangeable terms in the Bible. The disciples were first called Christians at Antioch in Acts 11, 26.

So, the disciples were called Christians. They're interchangeable terms. A real disciple or a real Christian is one who continues in what Jesus said.

Not a person who joins the church and gets baptized, says a sinner's prayer, goes forward on an altar call. None of those things tell you whether a person's a Christian or not. How do you know if someone's a Christian or not? If they're continuing in what Jesus said.

I read a really good tract written by an unknown guy. He was a brother of a friend of mine. It was never a widely published chapter.

I really liked it. Back in the early 70s, it was called, Are You Following the Shepherd? And in those days, I hadn't really been as clear in my own thinking as I became later from my studies of Scripture about this. But there's a really good tract.

It said, Are You Following the Shepherd? And he says, this is really the question for all of us. It's not, have you said a sinner's prayer? Have you been baptized? Have you joined the church? Have you jumped through these various hoops? He says, the real question is, are you following the shepherd? That's what makes you one of his sheep. Jesus said, my sheep hear my voice and they follow me.

So the real issue is, are you following him? Are you continuing in his word? It's not what you did when you were 12 years old, when you went forward. It's not what you did even last year. It's what you're doing now.

Are you continuing? Jesus said to these people who believed in him at that moment, If you continue, if you abide, if you remain in my words, then you are my disciples indeed. And if that happens, you shall know the truth. That is, if you continue in what Jesus said, then you are on his side, you are in his family.

And he'll reveal the truth to you through his words. And the truth will make you free. Now these are people that were ostensibly believers when he began talking to them.

But they already began to object. In verse 33, they answered him, We are Abraham's descendants, and we've never been in bondage to anyone. How can you say you'll be made free? Now this is very typical of the Gospel of John, where Jesus says something spiritual, and people take him in a physical sense.

I can give you living water. Oh, give me that water. Where's your bucket? You have to be born again.

How can I go back in a mother's womb and be born again? Destroy this temple in three days. Well, 46 years it took to build this temple. Every time Jesus speaks about something figuratively, people take him literally.

Including, eat my flesh and drink my blood. How can anyone eat this man's flesh and drink his blood? And so here also, you'll be made free. He's talking spiritually, but they take him literally.

They say, we're Abraham's seed, we've never been in bondage to anyone. How can you talk about us needing to be made free? We're insulted. Well, they weren't exactly in touch with their history apparently.

To say they've never been in bondage to anyone is about the most inaccurate assessment of Israel's history. You could imagine, because they had been in bondage for hundreds of years in Egypt. At the very outset of their existence as a nation, they escaped from bondage, a long period of bondage.

And then later on, in the period of the judges, they were often under oppressors who kept them under their heel. Midianites, and Ammonites, and Philistines. Later on, of

course, the southern kingdom went into Babylon for 70 years.

They were in bondage there, and they were never free again after that. Except for a brief season after the Maccabean revolt. They were in bondage to the Babylonians, then to the Persians, then to the Greeks, and then to the Romans.

And even then, when they're speaking, they're under the Romans. They say, we've never been in bondage to anyone. There's a Roman soldier standing at the next corner, keeping them in line.

But it's like they're in denial. They're not willing to admit their real circumstances. They're proud people.

We were not in bondage. What are those soldiers over there? We're not in bondage to them. They don't rule over us.

We're doing what we want to do. It's like the little kid who kept standing up in his high chair. His mother kept saying, sit down, and push him back down.

Finally, she strapped him in, and he couldn't get up again. And he said, I may be sitting down outwardly, but inside I'm standing up. And that's how Israel was.

We might be in bondage outwardly, but we're not in bondage in our minds. We're not acknowledging it. We're in denial.

And they took offense to the suggestion that they weren't free and needed to be made free by him. Well, these are people who believed him. Now they're already objecting to this statement.

Actually, what he said is a precious promise. I wouldn't object to that at all. Of course, maybe it's partly because I can read the whole story, and I know more of what he's talking about than they did.

But still, he said, you'll know the truth, and the truth will make you free. Obviously, that has nothing to do with political freedom. It has to do with freedom in your mind, freedom inside.

Knowing the truth sets you free from error and from wrong beliefs, and as he points out, from the bondage of sin. Because when they said, how do you say we will be made free? Jesus answered them, most assuredly I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin. That's what you have to be set free from.

And a slave does not abide in the house forever. But a son abides forever. Therefore, if the son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.

If you are a slave, you do not have a secure place in the family. The son does, and

therefore, if he liberates you, he can. He's the heir.

He's the heir of the household. He's got the authority to liberate the slaves. And therefore, if I set you free, you are really free.

Now, I can set you free. You listen to my words and obey them. Continue in my words, and then you'll know the truth, and it will make you free.

From what? From sin. So what is the answer to people's bondages, addictions, and slavery to sin? It is discipleship. It is continuing in Jesus' words.

Now, I don't mean to suggest that that's only, it's just a matter of learning his words, and mechanically and legalistically following them. We can't really follow his words without his spirit, and that's obvious. His spirit is that which we need, who gives us the ability to follow him, as well as the heart to do so.

But it's clear that Jesus indicated that man's problem is bondage to sin. And the solution is not psychotherapy. It's not 12-step programs.

It's not medications. If the problem is sin, then the solution is the truth. It will make you free.

And, of course, that's the truth operating in your life through the Holy Spirit. Remember when Paul said to the Corinthians that many of them had been in bondage to things like, well, the kinds of things that we send people to counselors for. In 1 Corinthians chapter 6, he said, in verse 9, We could say, nor sex addicts, nor kleptomaniacs, nor alcoholics, nor, and it gives these older words for these kinds of things, nor extortioners, none of them will inherit the kingdom of God.

And such were some of you, he says, but you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God. Now, these people have been set free by the name of Jesus, by the Spirit of God working in their lives, and by not being deceived. That is, the truth makes them free.

He begins this by saying, don't be deceived. Neither fornicators nor adulterers, etc. Don't be deceived, because if you think that having that as your identity tag, I am a fornicator, I am an alcoholic, I am this or that, that you're going to be entering the kingdom of God with that label, you're not.

Don't be deceived about that. The truth about that will set you free. You can stop calling yourself that, and you can be set free from that, and that slavery to sin will be broken.

Now, the people had said, we are Abraham's descendants. How can you say we need to be made free? We've never been in bondage to anyone. Jesus picks up on that thread too.

He answered their question about how he said they need to be made free. But now he picks on the Abraham connection in verse 37. I know that you are Abraham's descendants, but you seek to kill me because my word has no place in you.

I speak what I have seen with my father, and you do what you have seen with your father. Now, he doesn't tell them yet who he thinks their father is. He says, you and I have different fathers.

I'm speaking according to what my father has shown me, and you're following the agenda of your own father. They answered and said to him, Abraham is our father. And Jesus said to them, if you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham.

But now you seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth which I heard from God. Abraham did not do this. Now, notice he said in verse 37, I know that you are Abraham's descendants, but in verse 39, if you are Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham.

Yes, you are people who are descended from Abraham, but you are not Abraham's children in the sense that matters. The promises God made to Abraham and his children are to those who are his children in moral and spiritual affinity, not merely in genetics, not just hereditary descendants of Abraham. Remember John the Baptist said in Matthew chapter 3, when he's rebuking the Jews, he says, do not think to say in yourselves, we have Abraham as our ancestor.

He says, God could, if he wished, make of these stones children of Abraham. Being descended from Abraham is not what matters. Paul said in Romans 2.28 and 29, he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision which is outward of the flesh, but he is a Jew who is one inwardly, and that true circumcision is of the heart.

And so, the Bible teaches, John the Baptist and Jesus and Paul all taught that being descended from Abraham does not confer a particular blessing on anyone in itself. Being descended from Abraham is not important. God could make rocks, he could make children of Abraham from rocks.

But a child of Abraham in the sense that means that you really have some claim to an inheritance, claim to be the people of God because you're descended from Abraham, that is a different thing. In Galatians chapter 3, Galatians 3 beginning at verse 6, Paul said, just as Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness, therefore, know that only those who are of faith are the sons of Abraham. Abraham's primary spiritual accomplishment was that he believed God, and he was accounted righteous on the basis of his belief in God.

And Paul says the true children of Abraham are the ones who have the faith of Abraham. Very similar to what Jesus said here, if you were Abraham's children, you would do the

works of Abraham, that is you would do what Abraham did. He believed.

He didn't try to kill innocent people like you're doing. You're not doing what your father Abraham did. Therefore, you're not his true children.

So Paul says likewise, if you don't believe, then you're not like your father Abraham. You're not true children of Abraham. Only those who believe, who have the faith of Abraham, they are the true children of Abraham.

And then it says a little further down, in verse 28 and 29, he says, Now he's writing to a Gentile church here, Galatians, a bunch of Gentiles who became Christians. And he said to them, According to the promises. The promise God made Abraham is not to people who are merely physically descended from him.

Anyone who belongs to Christ is the seed and is the heirs. Gentile or Jew. There's no Jew or Gentile in Christ.

There's no racial considerations. God does not judge people by who their ancestors were, or by who their parents or grandparents were. God doesn't have grandchildren.

He only has children. And therefore, people have to have a relationship with God themselves, directly, not count on the fact that their parents or grandparents, ancient people in their ancestry had a relationship with God like Abraham did. Don't think to say we have Abraham as our ancestor.

That won't count for anything. And so Paul says, I mean Jesus says here in John 8, You are Abraham's descendants, but you aren't Abraham's children in the sense of heirs. You are not the chosen people as you think you are.

He says, because you would do the works of Abraham, you'd be like him if you were his children. Now you seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth. Verse 40 says, which I heard from God.

Abraham didn't do that. Abraham didn't try to kill me. He didn't try to kill people who told him the truth.

You do the deeds of your father. Now this is the second time he's mentioned their father. In verse 38 he says, I speak what I've seen with my father, and you do what you've seen with your father.

He hasn't told them who their father is, but they first said, well that's Abraham. Abraham's our father. He said, no, that's not true.

You have another father. And you're doing the deeds of your real father. Then they said to him, we were not born of fornication.

We have one father, God. Now I don't really know if those commentators are correct who think that when they said we were not born of fornication, they meant that as sort of a jab at Jesus. Many people think that because Jesus' mother was pregnant before she was married, that this news got around that Jesus was an illegitimate child, and that he was born of fornication.

And when they said we weren't born of fornication, some say that they were kind of making that a jab at his own questionable circumstances of birth. Actually later on in the Talmud, the Jews who rejected Christ came up with the story that Mary had gotten pregnant by a Roman soldier, and that Jesus was the illegitimate child of a Roman soldier and Mary. That became sort of the standard view of Jesus among the Jews in later eras when the Talmud came to be written.

So this idea that he was born of fornication did circulate among them, though that may or may not have been the case here, because they would have had to do a lot of research about his background to know even that his mother had been pregnant before he was born. They could find that out. If they had sent spies up to Nazareth where he grew up and inquired, they might have picked up the rumors about that.

But we don't know that they had done that kind of investigation. They might simply be saying, we're not illegitimate. We said we're children of Abraham, and you're saying we're not? You think we're not like legitimate children of Abraham? When they say we're not born of fornication, it might be that they're not making any reference to him at all, although many Christian teachers like to suggest they are.

And maybe they are, but we don't know. But then they stepped it up. First they said Abraham is our father, now they step it up and launch, God is our father.

Now, you might say, well, how could they say that when they took up stones to stone Jesus when he said God was his father? And when Jesus said God was his father, they said you're making yourself equal with God. So how could they then say God is our father? Well, what they meant was God is the father of the nation of Israel. It was not uncommon in the Old Testament for God to speak of Israel collectively as his firstborn, his son.

It was just a manner of speaking. But because of that, it was rare but not unheard of in the Old Testament for God to be spoken of as the father of the nation of Israel. And so they would not be thinking that, they're not saying God was their personal father like Jesus meant.

That's what they didn't like about Jesus. He said my father. They would say our father is God, our father as a nation.

He's the one who birthed our nation out of Egypt. He's the one who brought us into

existence. He's the father of the nation.

But they're not saying the same thing about God being their father that Jesus was saying or even that we would say when we say God is our father because we would say that God is not only the father of us collectively, he's each of our individual fathers. We've been born again. We've been born of God.

As many as received him, he gave the power to become the sons of God even to as many as believed in his name, John 1, 12 said. So both Jesus and Christians use this term much differently than the Jews intended it here. And Jesus said if God were your father, you would love me.

We'd be brothers. Because he's my father. If he was your father too, you'd love me.

We'd be family. For I proceeded forth and came from God, nor have I come of myself, but he sent me. Why do you not understand my speech? Because you're not able to listen to my word.

I might just say in passing, I don't want to say much about this verse because there's important verses coming up we have to dwell on, but Calvinists often use this particular verse. They say, see, they weren't elect. If you're not elect, you can't hear what he has to say.

If you're not elect, you can't believe. He's saying that they were not of the elect. And therefore he said you can't hear my words.

You can't understand my words. Well, indeed he was saying that they can't, but he didn't say it was because they weren't elect. He didn't make any reference to election here.

There might be any reason why they were unable to hear his words. Like their hearts were hardened? Like they'd made a career of disobeying God? I mean, there's not any reason to import some specifically Calvinist doctrine of election into this passage. For him to say you are unable to hear me, I can take that at face value.

I think there's lots of people who are unable to hear God because they've hardened their hearts, they've stopped their ears, their eyes they have closed, lest they should hear and be converted and I should heal them, said God. There's lots of people who've come into that condition. It may be because they're not elect, if someone wishes to hold to the doctrine of election according to the Calvinist model, but it certainly isn't, it's not a necessary inference here.

There's no reference to election here and this passage does not give any particular support to that specific doctrine. He's just saying that some people are indeed unable to hear him. They hear him, but they can't understand.

Their hearts are not in a condition where they could even respond because it doesn't make sense to them. You are not able to listen to my word. You are of your father the devil.

So he gets right down to it now. Instead of veiled references to their father, he says, you're of your father the devil and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning and he does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him.

When he speaks a lie, he speaks of his own resources for he is a liar and he's the father of it that is apparently of lying. And because I tell the truth, you do not believe me. You are of your father the devil who is committed to murder and lying.

And you want to murder me. Therefore, you're not of your father Abraham because he didn't want to murder people. He says, if you were children of Abraham, you wouldn't want to be murdering me.

You'd want to be more like Abraham. You want to kill me. I told you the truth.

Abraham didn't do that. You do the things your father does. People follow their father.

Now this is true in a lesser degree to natural children who are raised in the family business and the father trains them and they turn over the business to the children. The children follow in the steps of their father. But in the sense of spiritual parenting, it's universally true.

If you are spiritually a seed of the devil, then you're going to do what the devil does. If you're the child of God, you're going to do what God does. You'll be followers of God as dear children.

Ephesians 5.1 says. So, he's saying you can tell who your real parents are. Now he's not talking about their ancestry and there are, I just have to say this because there are so many wrong doctrines out there based on these scriptures.

There are the white supremacist groups, the serpent seed doctrine that teaches that the Jewish people were not really descended from Abraham at all. They were really the descendants of Eve and the serpent. That Eve and the serpent had a relationship that produced Cain and that the Jews of Jesus' time were the descendants of Cain.

And that's what Jesus meant. He said, you're of your father, the devil. However, this interpretation is nonsensical and it's only held by people who have about three brain cells and don't use any of them.

And to say that Jesus is saying these people are physically descended from Satan misses the point. Because he said in verse 37, I know you are Abraham's descendants. Now,

those who hold the serpent seed doctrine say the Jews of Jesus' time were not the true descendants of Abraham.

They were a different line that got confused for the descendants of Abraham. They're really the devil's line. But Jesus said he knew they were the descendants of Abraham.

So that throws a monkey wrench in that. And he's saying that you are spiritually the children of Abraham, not physically. If you look over at 1 John chapter 3, we have this business about being a child of the devil or a child of God talked about again.

In 1 John chapter 3, beginning with verse 7, Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as he is righteous. He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning.

This almost sounds like the same words of Jesus. The devil was a murderer from the beginning. And he says you're of your father the devil.

He was a murderer from the beginning. John says the devil sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil.

Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for his seed remains in him, and he cannot sin because he's been born of God. In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest. Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother.

For this is the message you've heard from the beginning, that we should love one another, not as Cain who was of the wicked one. So Cain was an example of someone who was a child of the devil. That's why these serpent seed doctrine teachers think that Cain was the physical offspring of Satan.

It says not as Cain who was of the wicked one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brothers were righteous. Now, to think that John or Jesus in talking about this is somehow talking about biological parentage is to miss the point completely.

Whoever does righteousness is a child of God. Whoever does sin is a child of the devil. It's not talking about family lines.

You can find people doing righteousness from every race. And you can find people doing evil from every race. It's not a racial thing.

It's a matter strictly of spiritual affinity. When it comes to spiritual relationship, you're either related to God or the devil. And you can tell which because you will do what your father does, spiritually.

And so Jesus said, He said, You are of your father the devil. He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources for he's a liar and the father of it.

And since you're his children, you're liars. And therefore you can't believe me because I'm telling the truth. You are committed to a lie.

I'm committed to the truth. We just aren't connecting. We're getting along like a slow waiter and a poor tipper here because we're on different pages.

I'm truth teller. You're lie tellers. Your father has committed lies.

And he says, Which of you convicts me of sin? And if I tell you the truth, why do you not believe me? If I'm lying, then I'm sinning. Can you point out any sin I'm committing? Can you point out any lie I'm telling? If not, then I'm telling the truth. And if I'm telling the truth, you should believe me.

He who is of God hears God's words. Therefore you do not hear because you are not of God. Now the Jews answered and said to him, Do we not say rightly, you are a Samaritan and have a demon? And Jesus answered, I do not have a demon, but I honor my father, and you dishonor me.

And I do not seek my own glory. There is one who seeks and judges. Most assuredly I say to you, if anyone keeps my word, he shall never see death.

Now this claim is going to raise a new objection from these people who are said to be, in verse 30, those who believed in him. But they are getting more and more offended by him. And he indicates that they're not his disciples.

They're actually of their father the devil. So they believed, even someone who's of their father the devil, apparently can believe in him somewhat. But if they don't continue, and especially when he says hard sayings, then it shows they're not his disciples indeed.

He said, if you keep my word, you'll never see death. And the Jews said to him, now we know that you have a demon. And by the way, you have a demon is their way of saying you're crazy.

They didn't have the word crazy in their language, or even insane. They didn't have the concept of mental illness or mental health. They had the idea of demons.

And so, when they said in verse 48, Do we not say rightly, that you're a Samaritan and have a demon? They mean, you're crazy. And they said, now we know you're crazy. Abraham is dead, and the prophets.

And you say, if anyone keeps my word, he shall never taste death. Are you greater than our father Abraham, who is dead? And the prophets are dead. Who do you make yourself

out to be? Now, Jesus gets this kind of question from time to time.

Do you think you're greater than so and so? Remember the woman at the well said, are you greater than Jacob, who gave us this well? Now he said, are you greater than Abraham? Are you greater than the prophets? That's a loaded question. Of course, Jesus could say, yes. But he doesn't ever speak quite so directly to these people.

He's evasive with his answers to them. Just like when he spoke to the crowds in Galilee, he used a parable always, so they wouldn't understand him. But he explained things privately to his disciples.

The people who were his enemies, he never really came out bluntly and said, I'll tell you who I am. I'm the Messiah. Now, he told the woman at the well, but she was an honest seeker.

But he doesn't tell these people. They say, who do you make yourself out to be? And he said, it doesn't matter who I make myself out to be. If I honor myself, my honor is nothing.

It's the question of what does God make me out to be? It is my Father who honors me, of whom you say that he is your God. Yet you have not known him, but I know him. And if I say I do not know him, I should be a liar like you.

But I do know him and keep his word. Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it and was glad. Now, when he said, Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day, he saw it and was glad.

He's saying, as he was saying earlier, if you were Abraham's children, you'd do the works of Abraham. If you were Abraham's true children, you'd see my day like you do, and you'd be happy about it. You're not happy.

You're not happy with me. You don't love me. If you were Abraham's children, you'd be like him.

He saw my day and was glad. True children of Abraham are happy to see Jesus. They receive Jesus.

They don't oppose Jesus. And the Jews said to him, You're not yet 50 years old, and have you seen Abraham? Well, he was indeed not yet 50 years old, probably only about 30 something. In the early 30s, we don't know his exact age, but he died before he was 35 in all likelihood.

And yet they didn't know his age. It's possible they were just trying to find an upper limit to make sure they weren't going to be inaccurate. They couldn't tell exactly how old he was.

And many times in third world countries, people don't keep track of exactly how old they are. It's very common in third world countries today for a person who's an adult not to know exactly what year they were born because they just don't keep track of those things. We've had African students in our school who didn't know how old they were.

They just said, We don't keep track of birthdays. And in the ancient world, remember what it says in Luke, that Jesus was about 30 years old when he started preaching. Luke doesn't even commit himself.

He doesn't know exactly how old Jesus was. Maybe even Jesus' disciples didn't know. Maybe no one knew because it wasn't kept track of.

He was about 30 though when he started and must have been therefore about 33 or 34 when he died. But he was not yet 50. They could tell that.

That was a safe number to choose to place him below. He didn't look like he was 50 yet. And they say, Have you seen Abram? Now, Abram had died 2,000 years earlier.

And he's claiming that he has seen Abram and Abram has seen him. On what occasion did Abram see Jesus? That's what they're asking. You're not 50 years old.

Do you think you've seen Abram? When would that have been? Well, who knows? Maybe it was when Abram met Melchizedek. If the writer of Hebrews is correct, in Hebrews chapter 7, Melchizedek was Jesus. And he appeared to Abram and Abram rejoiced to see him.

Gave him a tithe of everything he had. Maybe that's what he's referring to. Or maybe it was in Genesis 18 when Yahweh appeared to Abram and three men appeared.

Two of them angels and one of them Yahweh and Abram showed them hospitality. Fed them and sent them on their way. One way or another, we can say that Abram did see Jesus.

Although his statement, Abram rejoiced to see my day, might be more a statement that Abram had, of course, the promise of God that a seed of Abraham would bless the nations. And Abram rejoiced in that prospect. That in the eye of faith, he saw the day.

It says in Hebrews chapter 11 that all Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob all died in faith, never having received the promises, but they saw them afar off and embraced them, it says in Hebrews 11.13, I think it is. It says they saw them afar off and embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims. So, Jesus might be saying that Abram, your father, by faith he saw my day because he had the promise of God and he trusted in it and he saw it, as it were, by the eye of faith.

It's hard to know exactly how Jesus means this but it's very clear that he's saying that

Abraham knew about Jesus in some way and was very happy about Jesus. Unlike these people. And they say, you can't have seen Abraham because you're not old enough, you weren't around back then.

And he says, well, before Abraham was, I am. And then they took up stones to throw at him and Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple going through the midst of them and so passed by. There were other occasions when they wanted to kill him but this time they could hardly hold themselves back.

They took up stones actually with the intention of stoning him but he somehow slipped away. They did so because he said before Abraham was, I am. I am, again, is ego eimi which is in the present tense.

He has used that of himself in verse 24 and in verse 28. They didn't take up stones to stone him on those two occasions. Possibly because ego eimi was more ambiguous in that context.

It could mean I am or it could mean I am he. But in this case, ego eimi was very clearly a divine title. Most Christians believe that he is alluding to Exodus 3.14 where Moses was at the burning bush and God sent him to go confront Pharaoh and to tell Israel that God was going to deliver them.

He says, well, when they ask what your name is what name shall I give them? Who shall I say sent me? And God said, I am that I am. Therefore tell them that I am has sent you. And because of that verbal similarity most Christians feel like Jesus is referring to that.

God said, I am has sent you. Jesus said, before I ever met Moses, I am. Sounds like the same words.

Well, it's the same idea but it's not the same words. In the Septuagint which is the Greek Old Testament the words at 3.14 are not ego eimi. Now, it's true that John was probably translating Jesus' words from Hebrew or from Aramaic, I should say, into Greek.

The Gospel of John, like the other Gospels is written in Greek and Jesus probably was speaking in Aramaic when he gave these words. And therefore, John's choice of words would be John's choice of words, not Jesus'. Nonetheless, if John believed that Jesus was quoting Exodus 3.14 when he in Aramaic said, I am or I am he, one or the other and John chose Greek words to represent what Jesus said why didn't John choose the same Greek words that already were in the Septuagint? The Greek Old Testament that they were reading.

It seems that if he's trying to connect Jesus' statement with Exodus 3.14 that John, in choosing Greek words to translate I am that Jesus would have spoken in Aramaic and John now choosing some Greek words for that as he's writing in Greek he would presumably choose the same words that were already familiar from Genesis 3.14 in the

Septuagint, but he did not. He chose different words, ego eimi. Now, these words, however, also are a divine title but not from Exodus, but from Isaiah.

There are a number of times in Isaiah where God says, I am he which, in the Greek Old Testament is ego eimi the same words Jesus used here and God uses them in a sense where they cannot be mistaken for the generic I am he they are absolutely a personal title. If you look, there are a number of them but I want to show you about three cases of this. In Isaiah 41.4 Yahweh says, who has performed and done it calling the generation from the beginning I, Yahweh, am the first and with the last, ego eimi says the Septuagint.

I am he. I am the first, and I am with the last and I am Yahweh, and I am he. Now, this I am he is also found in chapter 43 of Isaiah.

Isaiah 43, verse 10 says you are my witnesses, says Yahweh and my servant, whom I have chosen that you may know and believe me and understand it, ego eimi, I am he and before me there was no God formed nor shall there be after me but look at verse 13 Indeed, before the day was, I am he ego eimi Now, notice this the grammatical awkwardness before the day was, I am he wouldn't it more naturally be before the day was, I was he? The structure is exactly like Jesus' statement before Abram was, I am he ego eimi This is how you can see that is a title rather than just a generic I am he because he would have said before the day was, I was he and I still am, or something like that but he says before the day was, I am he mixes up the tenses as if the I am he must remain in the present tense no matter what the rest of the sentence calls for and you see the same thing in Isaiah 46 in verse 4 verses 3 and 4 Listen to me, O house of Jacob and all the remnant of the house of Israel who have been upheld by me from birth who have been carried from the womb even to your old age I am he ego eimi and even to gray hairs I will carry you now he's talking future tense now even to your old age I will carry you even to your gray hairs I am he not I will be he you see, there's this ego eimi in Isaiah this I am he that doesn't change when the sentence structure calls for a different tense you've got a past tense in Isaiah 43.6 43.13, excuse me before the day was that's past tense I am, present tense then in Isaiah 46.4 you've got a future tense even unto your old age that's future tense I am, present tense the ego eimi seems to be unchangeable in the present tense and therefore it is a title that Yahweh is using for himself ego eimi, I am he now Jesus then said before Abram was ego eimi if he had said before Abram was, I was or as the Jehovah's Witness Bible translates it before Abram was, I have been then there'd be no reason for them to take up stones they'd probably just go call the guys with the white jackets you were around before Abram, you're nut he doesn't say merely I was around before Abram he says before Abram was ego eimi, I am I am he and they recognize that was taking the divine title that God used in Isaiah and calling himself Yahweh and so they took up stones to stone him and yet he passed by and got away again and we've taken a long time to get to this point it's a long chapter but we're going to stop there

