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A Question of Pedegree (Part 2)



The Life and Teachings of Christ - Steve Gregg

In this continuation of "A Question of Pedegree," Steve Gregg examines the concept of genuine discipleship and the dangers of mediocrity and nominalism in Christianity. He emphasizes the importance of a true relationship with Jesus and the need to keep God's laws to please Him. Gregg also addresses the false claim of the Serpent Seed doctrine, which goes against the idea of regeneration being present in anyone who believes the Gospel. He ultimately highlights the importance of seeking the truth and living a life that pleases God.

Transcript

1 John 3, verses 21 and 22 says, Now, John 8, verse 30, Now, as the conversation goes on in the remainder of this chapter, it becomes clear that Jesus is in a conversation with people who become increasingly adversarial toward Him in their tone. And yet, we never read of a new audience. In other words, it sounds like He's in dialogue with the same people throughout.

It's just He said and they said and He said and they said, and we never have, beyond this point, the identifying of a new audience. And what's interesting about this is the audience that He's speaking to are those Jews who believed Him. In verses 30 and 31, as He spoke these words, many believed in Him.

And Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him. And then in verse 33, they, meaning the Jews who believed Him, answered Him, We are Abram's descendants, how can you say this? And then, later on, they speak back to Him again, some more, only as they do, they're getting more offended by Him. In verse 41, He says to them, You do the deeds of your father.

And they said to Him, We were not born of fornication, we have one Father God. And going on, further down, they say to Him, in verse 48, the Jews answered and said to Him, Do we not say rightly that you are a Samaritan and have a demon? Now, there is a possibility here that the Jews, in verse 48, are different Jews than the ones that are referred to in verse 31, the Jews who believed Him. It's possible that Jewish unbelievers,

listening in to this conversation with those that were believing, piped in at this point.

However, even before that point, the people Jesus is talking to are clearly people that He doesn't put any trust in. He's not confident that they're real disciples. Which is why He speaks to them, in verse 31, and says, If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed.

Now, to say, If such and such is true, then you are My disciples indeed, the very wording suggests that they were implying discipleship. They were implying that they were committed disciples. But to say, But if you meet such and such conditions, you are indeed My disciples, means that unless you do meet those conditions, you may be pretending.

You may be non-genuine disciples. Genuine disciples can be measured by this standard, that they continue in My words. Now, the word disciple refers to a learner, a person who is a follower of a master or of a teacher.

Jesus, of course, we know had disciples, but so did John the Baptist, so did the Pharisees. They had disciples. The major rabbis, most of them had disciples who were their learners.

And when a person was disciplined, he was a protegee of some mentor. And he was learning. He was under the discipline and tutelage of a great teacher.

And a person who is a true disciple of a teacher would not just be one who heard what he said, and then went and did something else, but someone who imbibed the spirit of that teacher and embraced the doctrines of that teacher and felt that that teacher had it right, and therefore they followed the lifestyle and the teachings of that teacher. That's what disciples did. And therefore, Jesus is saying to them, the only way you can prove that you're really My disciples is if you continue in what I say.

If you really pick up on My teaching and embrace it and live it and continue to do so, then you are My disciples indeed. Now, in a way that you might not notice, this verse actually serves as a reasonably positive verse for a Calvinist proposition of perseverance of the elect. The Calvinists believe that if you are truly elect, if you're truly saved, you will persevere to the end.

And this verse, in one sense, could be seen to support that notion. Because Jesus is saying, if you continue, if you persevere, if you don't fall away, if you don't discontinue obeying Me, the idea is, if you persevere, then you are, He doesn't say, then you will be My disciples, He says, then you are now My disciples indeed. Implying that if you're true disciples right now, if you are real converts, then it'll be shown in the fact that you continue in My words.

Although He doesn't say to the end. And that is why this falls a little short of proving the

Calvinist point. He's saying that genuine discipleship is seen in a person walking with the Lord, continuing in His words.

However, He doesn't say continuing to the end. Because Judas continued in Jesus' words for some time, but he didn't continue to the end of his life. And he clearly was not, well, at one point he was a disciple indeed.

As I understand it, some believe not, but I believe at one point he was a true follower of Jesus and believed himself to be. But he was probably like many of these Jews who believed in him. They saw themselves as believers and were told they believed Him.

But it's quite obvious that believing has more than one specie. And the only specie of believing that really constitutes a person a true Christian, a true disciple, is that specie which gives evidence of itself. That is, that faith that gives evidence of its presence by obedience to what Christ said.

If a person claims to believe in Christ, like these obviously were even told they did believe in Christ, but they didn't believe in the right way. They didn't believe in a way that transformed their commitment from self to Christ. They didn't forsake all other things in order to be loyal to His teachings.

And falling short of that, Jesus indicates that those who did not do such things were not true disciples. It's not so much that they were weak disciples or that they were backslidden disciples. They weren't true disciples at all.

They believed in Him and were told that in the same verse that he states the condition. So it's possible to believe in Jesus even in a way that makes one think of himself as a believer and yet not be a true disciple. And that's a sobering thought when we consider how many people there are who would regard themselves to be Christians and yet they do not meet this test.

If you continue in my words, people reject the words of Christ, water down the words of Christ, ignore the words of Christ, whatever. They're not true disciples by Jesus' standard. And His is the only one that's going to matter on the day of judgment it seems to me.

And he went on to say what is true of genuine disciples. Verse 32, you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free. Of course later on he said in John 14, 6 that he was the truth.

But not only is he the truth, but he told the truth. And he said that of course. In verse 16 he says, my judgment is true.

And in verse 14 he says, my witness is true. So not only was he the truth, but everything he said was the truth. And knowing the truth that Jesus taught and that Jesus is makes

one free.

Now an awful lot of people are familiar with that claim that the truth shall make you free. In fact there's even, non-Christians sometimes put a secular spin on that. Truth to the secular mind is not necessarily related to Jesus.

But the idea that the truth will make you free has been misunderstood by many even in our time as to its meaning. And it was misunderstood by the original hearers too. They thought he was referring to political freedom.

And they said, well listen, we're Abraham's descendants. We've never been in bondage to anyone. How can you say we will be made free? Now their response is strange.

In the extreme. They say we as Abraham's descendants have never been in bondage to anyone. It's hard to know why they would say that.

In fact, everyone knew, every Jewish child knew, because they mentioned it every Passover. They celebrated every Passover that the Jews had in fact been in bondage to man for 430 years of their history. And they celebrated the fact that they were released from that lengthy bondage every year.

They brought it to remembrance. They had also, the people of Judea, had been in bondage in Babylon for 70 years, which was also something they were not embarrassed to remember. I mean, they knew of it.

They spoke of it freely. And even at the moment that Jesus was speaking to them, they were under the heel of the Romans. And while they were not continuously under hard bondage under the Romans like they were under Pharaoh, yet they were not free.

They were not politically free. And they knew it, and they chafed under it. So why they would say we have never been in bondage to anyone is hard to know unless already they were getting defensive and irrational.

People sometimes get irrational in argument. Remember back in John 7? When the chief priests and Pharisees were shocked to hear Nicodemus say something favorable toward Jesus? And in verse 52, they answered and said to him, Are you also from Galilee? Search and look. No prophet has arisen out of Galilee.

That's a stupid thing to say. There are a lot of prophets that arose out of Galilee. Hosea, Elijah, Elisha, Jonah.

These were prophets from Galilee. Galilee is just where the northern kingdom of Israel was in the Old Testament times. And there were a lot of prophets who arose out of Galilee.

As a matter of fact, John the Baptist had arisen. Well, no, I take that back. He hadn't.

Jesus had. But John did begin preaching apparently up near Galilee, but he was actually from some city of Judah. I take that one back.

But there were a number of prophets that arose out of Galilee, and the Jews knew it if they just think about it. But when they were kind of like a cornered animal, they just kind of started striking out irrationally and making statements that were obviously not true and which they would never make in a calmer moment. And that must be what's going on here when they say, we've never been in bondage to anyone.

Because the fact that they had as a nation been in bondage for many centuries in their history was not a matter of embarrassment to them. I mean, it was something they were not ashamed to acknowledge or that they would refuse to acknowledge in other situations. So they must be speaking here irrationally out of a defensive resentment that he would speak of them as being not free and that they needed to continue in his words and be his disciples in order to know the truth so that they could be free.

And it's from that apparent resentment that they speak here and say, how dare you say, essentially they're saying, that we need to be made free. We're not in bondage, never been in bondage to anyone. And Jesus answered them, Most assuredly I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin, and therefore he's clarifying what freedom means here.

We're talking about a slavery of a different sort. Now, Jesus could have, of course, called them on the inaccuracy of their statement. We've never been in bondage to anyone.

He could have pointed out, Oh, you've been in bondage many, many times. But that would have been a rabbit trail in the discussion. He wanted to move in a specific direction.

He didn't let himself be distracted by the misstatements of his critics. He had a point to make. And the point was, even if it were true, which it was not, but even granting them the point that they had never been in bondage to any man, they are nonetheless in bondage to sin, as evidenced by the fact that they commit sin.

Now, the Jews verbally acknowledge the law of God as good, and the fact that they break it proves that they are not totally under their own control. That's what Paul said about himself in Romans 7. I acknowledge with my mind that the law is good, but I don't do the things I acknowledge. Therefore, I'm being brought into bondage, he says, to the law of sin and death.

There's another law in my members that brings me into the bondage of sin and death. Sin is a bondage. And even if I want to do what's right and agree with the word of God and the law of God that it's good, sin in my members brings me into bondage.

And Jesus was pointing this out to them. Listen, if you commit sin, it's because you're in

bondage to sin. After all, you people don't really want to sin.

At one level, you're Jews. You want to be different than the Gentiles. You want to obey God's laws.

You want to boast in God's law, and yet you don't keep it. Why not? Why do you sin then? Is it because you don't want to live righteously? Well, at one level, you certainly want to, but there must be something that prevents you from it. The fact that you sin shows that you are in bondage to something stronger than yourself.

And when I talk about being made free, it is from this that I intend to make you free, if you are my disciple and if you know the truth. Therefore, when Jesus said, the truth will make you free, in the context, he explains free from sin. Free from the bondage and power of sin in your life.

And how is one made free? By being a disciple, by continuing in his words, and by knowing the truth. Now, this is very important in our own day, because Christians in our time, or let's just say people who profess to be Christians, I suspect that most of them can't be Christians by the definition Jesus uses here. But I don't want to be so uncharitable as to say for sure they're not Christians, because only God knows for sure.

But let's just say many people who are regarded to be Christians are as much in bondage to sin as their unsaved neighbors are. And worse than that, if anything could be worse than that, worse than that they don't acknowledge that it's a sin problem from which Jesus intends to make them free by obedience to his words and knowledge of the truth. When a person has a problem with drunkenness, as likely as not, he's going to be told by the church he's an alcoholic, he's got an addiction problem.

He needs to go into a recovery program, he needs 12 steps, he needs therapy or something. There's a minister who stepped down from the ministry because of voyeurism, he was a peeping tom, and he submitted himself to his ecclesiastical superiors and they sent him to a counselor, a Christian counselor, who told him he was a sex addict. He had to go through some kind of recovery about that.

And if you've got a sin problem these days, it's now redefined as a pathological thing, as a mental illness, or something that needs some kind of specialized professional counsel, not from the Bible, but usually counsel that's borrowed from one of the great masters in secular psychology, sometimes dressed up a little bit in Christian jargon, but still the same concepts from Freud or Jung or Maslow or Carl Rogers or Albert Ellis. Some of these guys are the ones that Christians really like to read a lot, although all of them were pagans and some were adamantly anti-Christian pagans. And yet, you see, sin has been redefined so that sin's cure has been redefined among Christians.

And this is a terrible thing. This is a scary thing. Because sin is a universally human

problem, even Christians wrestle with it, but Jesus told us how to be free of it.

But if Christians reject what Jesus said about it and don't continue in his words, they'll be stuck looking for other ways to get free of it. And unfortunately, they're going to go to the broken cisterns that the world has hewn that can hold no water. Remember, God said, in Jeremiah, My people have committed two evils.

They've forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and they've hewn out for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water. This is certainly an indictment that would hold true of much of the modern church today. They've forsaken what God has said about sin and about behavior, and they've forsaken the fountain of living waters, and they have hewn cisterns for themselves.

Cisterns are water reservoirs, systems of sustenance and refreshment and help that are different from what God provides and which the world provides. Unfortunately, these don't hold water for long. And Jesus said how you get free.

If you're a drunkard, if you've got an ongoing problem with sexual lust that overcomes you, if you're greedy, if you've got some other substance abuse problem, if you've got an anger problem, if you've got a self-pity problem, sometimes called depression, if you've got an anxiety problem, none of these things are secular issues. Every one of them are forbidden in Scripture and therefore moral issues. God can't forbid you to get a cold.

You have no choice in the matter, in many cases, before you get a cold. But whatever He forbids you to do, you do have a choice in the matter. Whatever He forbids you to do, if you do the thing He forbids you to do, you're sinning.

It's a moral issue. And since the Bible says do not be anxious for anything, and put away all wrath and all anger, and tells us to stop sinning in various ways, it's quite clear that to do these things is not a behavior to be described in pathological terms, but in moral terms. And the human condition has been redefined even among Christians.

First it was in the world, but the Church is very quick to adopt worldly thinking about many things, especially once it becomes almost universal in the world, then the Church kind of feels out of step if they don't buy into it, sadly. But the human condition has been defined not as sin, but as sickness. And therefore people who are regarded as having the status of medical professionals in the mental health industry and so forth, these people are the cures, the healers, of what Jesus said is taken care of simply by being a disciple.

By continuing in His words, you'll know the truth, and the truth will make you free. From what? From the slavery of sin. What is alcoholism but slavery to sin? To the sin of drunkenness.

What is a person who's addicted to pornography or gambling or voyeurism or something like that? What is that person but a person who's a slave of sin? And what did Jesus say?

But that if the Son sets you free, you'll be free indeed. And how do you get free? If you continue in My words, you're My disciples and you'll know My truth, and the truth will make you free. So getting free from these things is a spiritual thing.

It has to do with embracing what Christ taught and living it. Now some might say, well, that's maybe easier said than done. I mean, obviously many alcoholics wish they could stop drinking.

And just to tell them that Jesus said you shouldn't drink alcohol, I mean, that's the truth. And they may know that truth, but that doesn't in itself make them free. That's true.

It's not simply one aspect of the truth that makes a person free. It's embracing the whole truth. And the whole truth has more to do with just the particular problem that's bothering someone.

It has to do with underlying attitudes, where their basic commitment in life is, the degree of their commitment to God, the degree of their intensity of seeking God with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength. That's all part of the truth that Scripture teaches too, you see. I mean, the Bible has more to say about drunkenness than just don't be drunk.

It has more to say about sin than just don't commit this particular sin. It tells you what sin is and that you shouldn't do it, but then it presents to you an entirely new life in Christ with many, many aspects to it, which if a person saturates himself with the truth of Scripture and embraces that truth, the holistic truth of Scripture, it will bring about liberty. It will bring about freedom.

It will bring about deliverance. And short of that, people will seek all kinds of other things to try to get over self-destructive behaviors that they may or may not regard to be sin, but which are. Some Christians go into things like inner healing or other psychological therapies.

Others move into the deliverance area where they try to get the demons of lust out and the demons of drunkenness and the demons of anger and so forth out, none of which are mentioned in the Bible. But these things are works of the flesh. And if we walk in the Spirit, we do not fulfill the lust of the flesh, the Bible says.

So obviously walking in the Spirit, which is following the truth of Jesus, not only this or that truth or a certain collection of truths that he spoke that we embrace, but the whole truth of everything he taught about us, to deny ourselves, take up our cross, follow him and so forth. That's all part of it. But the point I'm making is sometimes when you tell people, well, you know, you don't need this complex, sophisticated therapy to get over such and such problem in your life.

You just need to follow the Word of God. There's always those people who are in favor of Christian psychology or the merge of Christianity and psychology and they say, well, you

can't just cure people by giving out Bible verses like aspirins or like vitamin pills or like medicine pills. And they're right about that.

We don't help people just by giving them individual verses. And when I say that following the teachings of Christ and knowing the truth will make you free, I don't mean knowing this verse or that verse. Following Christ is just as much a wide range of behaviors and attitudes and so forth as not following Christ is.

I mean, it's as holistic. It makes a demand on every attitude, on every commitment, on every value in your life. And right, one verse isn't going to set you free from a life-dominating problem.

But embracing the whole alternative truth in life that Jesus is, is going to set people free. And many of us know either from our own lives or from people we know, people who had totally life-dominating problems who were made totally free simply through the Lord and not through the worldly ways that the church prefers to look at. But you see, to follow the Lord at that level and even preach that people should follow the Lord at that level is unpopular teaching today.

It makes people uncomfortable. It challenges them in their mediocrity and in their nominalism as Christians. And if people preach a hard discipleship and say, listen, you're not really saved, you're not really a disciple unless you follow Jesus.

Unless you're willing to forsake all that you have, you can't be a disciple. Unless you hate father, mother, wife, children, your own life also, you cannot be my disciple, he said. Unless you take up your cross daily, you cannot be my disciple, he said.

Unless you continue in all that he said, you cannot be his disciple. That makes Christianity a lot more costly than just, you know, come to church and sing the songs and try to avoid scandal and don't bring too much embarrassment on the congregation and believe in Jesus while you're at it. You know, and then you'll be saved.

Well, maybe, maybe not. I'd rather put my hopes on what Jesus said and making sure I'm doing what he said, since that's what he said matters, than on what some man feels more comfortable talking about Christianity as. So, there are... A lot of churches would probably get smaller if the preach... and the preachers know it, if they preach discipleship the way Jesus did.

And so they don't. And because they don't, they have people who aren't free because they're not continuing everything Jesus said. They're not even talking about what Jesus said, in many cases.

And therefore, people who come into the church with problems stay in the church with problems. And since the church is, in many cases, not willing to preach what Jesus said and to impose that on the consciences of the congregation, say, this is what you are

required to do to be a disciple. If the church isn't willing to take that route, they still have to deal with the problems of alcoholism and wife abuse and child abuse and pornography and adultery and all these things that are going on in the church.

If they're not going to look to Jesus and His words, they have to look to the world. And the world is ready with a great number of offerings in this area. And so there are very few large churches in the United States that do not have at least one psychologist on their staff, on their church staff, a full-time psychologist on staff.

Because it is assumed that psychology must hold the answer. But the Bible indicates that Jesus is the answer in following Him, being His disciple, knowing the truth is what makes you free. Period.

Verse 37. Now these people, in claiming that they had not been in bondage to anyone, also affirmed that they were children of Abraham. They said that back in verse 33.

And so Jesus says to them 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. 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.

You do the deeds of your Father. Then they said to Him, we were not born of fornication. We have one Father, God.

Jesus said to them, if God were your Father, you would love me. 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 are not able to listen to my word. You are of your Father, the devil, and the desires of your Father you want to do. 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 is a liar and the father of it. But because I tell the truth, you do not believe me. Which of you convicts me of sin? And if I tell the truth, why do you not believe me? He who is of God hears God's words.

Therefore, you do not hear, because you are not of God. Pretty blunt in saying these people are not of God. Now, he does affirm in verse 37 that they were Abraham's descendants.

Though he seems to say the opposite. In verse 39 where it says, if you were Abraham's

children, you would do the works of Abraham, which they clearly were not and were not doing. Now, he seems to contradict himself, but I'm glad he made both statements.

Because it tells us two things. One is he acknowledges that they were, in fact, physically descended from Abraham. That's important.

It's important in one argument at least, because there are those who hold what's called the serpent seed doctrine. Fortunately, they're not very numerous among Christians who hold this. But you may run into them.

There are some cult-like groups within Christianity. William Branham, for instance, who was a very famous healing evangelist back in the 40s, he taught this doctrine. And there are still Branhamites, although he's been dead for years.

There are people who have taken his sermons and broken them into chapters and verses like the Bible, and they study Branham like the Bible. They would, of course, hold to the serpent seed doctrine. And most white supremacist kind of groups, which I don't consider to be Christian in any sense, but they often regard themselves to be Christians and use the Bible.

They think Jesus was a white supremacist. These people believe that the Jewish race came from sexual relations between Eve and the serpent. They actually teach this.

They think this is in the Bible, that Eve had sexual relations with the serpent and Cain was the result of that. And Cain was the ancestor of the Jewish people. And their claim to being descended from Abraham is a false claim.

Now, see, where they get this is from very poor exegesis of a few passages. In 1 John 3, it says, It says, So John says Cain was of the wicked one. And they say, oh, that means that he was the child of Satan.

And since Eve was clearly his mother, it must have been between Eve and Satan that this man Cain came along. And then the fact that Jesus in this passage, in verse 4, says, You are of your father the devil. They connect that and say, Ah, so the Jews are descended from Cain, whose father was the devil.

This is how they argue. Now, anyone who's done much Bible reading with a desire to understand it can see immediately through the idiocy of that kind of exegesis. But not everyone is not idiotic.

And there are some people who hold this, to my mind, idiotic, anti-Semitic view, that the Jews are not descended from Abraham, they're descended from Cain. And they only claim to be descended from Abraham. Now, this is about as stupid as you can get, you know, as far as exegesis goes.

But just to point out that Jesus disagrees with these people, the same people of whom he said, You are of your father the devil, he acknowledged in verse 37, I know that you are Abraham's descendants. So Jesus confirms that the Jews are truly, they're not descended from Cain, they're descended from Abraham, which clearly in the Bible is descended from Seth. And so, I mean, that one statement in verse 37, I know that you are Abraham's descendants debunks entirely the whole serpent seed doctrine which some people who call themselves Christians hold.

Yet, in St. Inverse 39, if you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham. He makes it clear that to really be a child of Abraham in the sense that God made promises to Abraham and his seed, you have to be more than physically descended from Abraham. You have to show your relationship to Abraham spiritually by doing the same kind of works of a spiritual quality like those of Abraham.

Abraham believed God, it was imputed to him for righteousness. If you want to be a true seed of Abraham, you have to believe God like he believed God. He, you have to do the works of Abraham.

Abraham was obedient, loyal to God. He embraced the messianic hope, and this is brought out later on by Jesus. In verse 56, he says, Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it and was glad, unlike these people who were not glad to see Jesus and didn't embrace him.

So, what he is saying is, to be a seed of Abraham, there are two ways you can be called a seed of Abraham. One is physically, but that doesn't count for anything. John the Baptist said to the Jews, Don't think to say in yourselves, we have Abraham for our ancestor.

God is able to raise up of these stones, children of Abraham. Being physically descended from Abraham didn't count for anything, as far as John the Baptist and Jesus were concerned, or Paul for that matter, who had a very good Jewish pedigree himself, as did Jesus and John. John was a Levite, Jesus was of the descent from David, and Paul was, you know, a Benjamite of pure stock.

But all three of these men indicated that being a Jew by birth doesn't count for a thing. Remember when Paul in Philippians 3 talked about how I was a Hebrew of Hebrews of the tribe of Benjamin, and I was this, that, and the other thing, a Pharisee. He says, but all that I count as dung, I count it as loss, it means nothing to me, so that I might gain Christ.

My whole hope is in Christ, not in my ancestry. And so Paul said, He is not a Jew who is one outwardly, but who is one inwardly, in Romans 2 of 28. In other words, Jesus, John the Baptist, Paul, they all said the same thing.

Being physically descended from Abraham does not count for a thing, in terms of salvation or the promises made to Abraham. The true children of Abraham are those who are not just physically descended from him, but who are spiritually bear his likeness. They have the faith of Abraham, as Galatians 3 points out.

So that they who have the faith of Abraham are blessed with Father Abraham, Paul says in Galatians 3. They do the works of Abraham, Paul said. And these people, he points out, were not doing that. Abraham rejoiced to see Jesus.

These people wanted to kill him. Therefore, they showed that their parentage was not from Abraham in the spiritual sense. Physically, yes.

But there is a spiritual parentage also to be considered. And they did not like him challenging them on that. And they said in verse 41, We were not born of fornication.

We have one Father, God. Now they are getting even more emphatic about the pureness of their pedigree here. God is our Father.

Now, when they said we were not born of fornication, one opinion out there among Bible scholars is that they were suggesting that he was. There are many Bible teachers who feel that the Pharisees, the chief priests, they had their scouts out looking for information against Jesus. And that they visited his hometown and interviewed people from Nazareth and found out through the grapevine that Jesus' mother had been pregnant and had disappeared from town for a little while before she was married because she was known to be pregnant and so forth.

And that having been armed with this information against Jesus, they now kind of throw it in his face saying we aren't born of fornication as if to imply like you are. And that's how many teachers teach this passage. I for one have never seen that as a necessary consideration here.

Although later on in the Talmud the Jews have taken the position that Jesus was the illegitimate son of Mary. But that's not necessarily implied here. And there's actually no place in the Gospels that we read of the Jews explicitly accusing Jesus of being born of fornication.

It may be implied in the statement but it certainly is a reach beyond what is necessary to assume from this. You see, when they said we are not born of fornication they're defending themselves against what they thought he was charging them with. They thought he was charging them with being illegitimate.

Well, why would they think that? Because he said if you really were Abraham's seed you would do the works of Abraham. Therefore, he appeared to be challenging the legitimacy of their pedigree of whether they really were legitimately descended from Abraham. And they understood this perhaps maybe he thinks that some Gentiles came in and slept with

our mothers or something.

I mean, that our real father is not the Jewish man at the head of our household that we were born out of wedlock or something. They don't understand what he's saying. And therefore they suspect he may be accusing them of being illegitimate children.

And they say, no, we have one father, God. We're pure. Jesus said to them, if God were your father, you would love me.

Just like if you were really Abraham's seed you'd have Abraham's attitude. So if you were really God's seed you'd have God's attitude. God loves me, you'd love me.

If you were really brothers of mine if you were children of God you'd be my brothers and you'd love me like a brother. For I proceed forth and came from God. Nor have I come of myself, but he sent me.

And he says, why do you not understand my speech? It's because you're not able to listen to my word. Likewise, in verse 47 he says, he who is of God hears God's words. Therefore you do not hear because you're not of God.

He's basically saying that because these people have not made any commitment to God previously the revelation that God is bringing through Christ is not welcomed by them. They are not people of God. Now see, again Calvinists would use this verse also.

These verses that say you can't even receive the gospel unless you are first regenerate. God has to sovereignly regenerate you so that you become of God before you can even hear and understand and appreciate the gospel. So that again, of course the Calvinist view is that regeneration comes before faith.

Whereas the alternate view which I believe is more biblical is that faith comes before regeneration. But they would use verses like verse 7. Only he who is already of God can hear Jesus' words. And because the reason you can't hear is because you're not of God.

The idea being that you have to become of God before you can even hear or believe or receive his words. But what they fail to realize in a verse like this is that it was possible before Jesus came for people who had never heard his words previously or believed in him to already be of God. Because there were faithful Jews prior to the coming of Jesus.

There was a faithful remnant who were people of God. And people who had a prior commitment to God would hear what Jesus had to say and would receive it. And the people who had already made a prior commitment to not follow God but to follow their own ways they could not receive what Jesus had to say.

He came with a message to those whose hearts were ready who already were disposed toward following God in some sense. But it doesn't mean that it doesn't prove the idea

that regeneration had to be present before anyone can believe the gospel. This was true in a special sense in the days of Jesus because there were true believers in God who had not yet believed in Jesus because he hadn't been around before this.

That was a unique generation of Jews. So there were some who were God's people as when Jesus said in his prayer in John 17 those that you have given me I have kept them and they were yours but you've given them to me. It means that they already were God's people.

They were already God's believing remnant before he came. And when he came God gave them to him to be his disciples. Just like John and others were disciples of John the Baptist before they met Jesus.

But John gave them to him. He said there's the Lamb of God. He must increase.

I must decrease. Okay, now in verse 44 you are of your father the devil and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth because there's no truth in him.

When he speaks lies he speaks from himself because he's a father of lies. He said these people were liars and murderers. Therefore they exhibited not the traits of Abraham who was neither a liar nor a murderer nor of God who is not a liar or murderer but of the devil who is both a liar and a murderer.

He's a murderer from the beginning and he's not a truth teller. He never stood in the truth. Therefore your lack of commitment to the truth and your murderous intentions against me he says show your relationship to the devil.

Now this is all to the people who were said back in verse 32 have believed him. So it's possible for people to believe in Jesus at some level and still be committed more to the devil. They'd be more willing to kill Jesus than follow him if he pressed his claims upon them unequivocally.

And a lot of people in churches the only reason they're not hostile toward Jesus is because those claims of Jesus aren't really pressed upon them. And therefore they think themselves to be believers. But there are many there no doubt like these who are really of the father of the devil.

Now the fact that Jesus said the devil was a murderer from the beginning is one of the verses that may suggest a doctrine contrary to the traditional idea about Satan being a fallen angel. The traditional doctrine is that Satan was an angel a good angel and that he rebelled against God and fell. There's actually no statement in scripture that says that.

It is a doctrine that originated as near as we can tell from Tertullian in about the second century. So it has a very long history in the church and has been pretty much held as

orthodox throughout the church from almost the beginning. But the fact remains there's no statement of scripture that indicates the devil was ever an angel or ever good.

And there are statements like this that may imply the opposite. Jesus said the devil was a murderer from the beginning. And John said in 1 John 3.8 the devil sinned from the beginning.

1 John 3.8 Now I don't say that these verses are incapable of some other nuance. But they sound as if Jesus is saying the devil is wicked from his own beginning. But it doesn't say his own beginning and therefore might have another meaning.

But it seems like the most natural understanding of the expression would say something like that. Now he says in verse 46 Which of you convicts me of sin? And if I tell the truth, why don't you believe me? Now the flow of thought here is I'm telling the truth, but you don't believe me. So you must think I'm lying.

But lying is a sin. Have you ever caught me sinning? Have you ever seen a sin in me? Have you found any defect in my integrity? No. Then I must not be a liar.

And if I'm not a liar, why don't you believe me? That's what he's saying. And he tells them why they don't believe him. Because they're not of God in verse 47.

Now we need to finish up here. 48 Then the Jews answered and said to him, Do we not say rightly that you're a Samaritan and have a demon? Jesus amazingly keeping his composure says, I don't 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.

Keeping Jesus' word, again, is here given as the thing that marks a person out for salvation. I realize that that sounds a little unorthodox in some of our evangelical circles because we're so emphatic about we're saved by faith, not by works. Saved by faith, not by works.

I mean, that's the thing we get from the Reformation. It's what we glory in, that Martin Luther recovered for us. We're saved and justified by faith, not by works.

But there's another side to that, too. I don't think anyone is doing theology well who just takes a few verses from Galatians and from Romans and establishes a total doctrine of salvation and neglects everything Jesus said on the subject. Like, you have to continue in my words.

He who keeps my word, he shall never see death. Now, that's not in conflict with the idea of being saved by faith, of course, because, as we said earlier, a saving faith produces works. Particularly, in this case, he mentions works of obedience to his words.

Then the Jews said to him, Now we know you have a demon. 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? And Jesus said, If I honor myself, my honor is nothing. It is my Father who honors me, of whom you say he is your God.

Yet you have not known him. But I know him. And if I say I do not know him, I shall 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. Then the Jews said to him, You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham, who died two thousand years earlier than this? Jesus said to them, Most assuredly I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.

Then they took up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by. Well, we're just about out of time, unfortunately, and one of the most important scriptures in the chapter is here, where Jesus said, before Abraham was, I am. We're going to have to, I guess, not get this on tape, but I'll very quickly give it to you, what I have to say about this.

As you can, you're probably familiar with this passage, and you're probably familiar with the tendency of Christians to equate Jesus' claim to the name of Jehovah given to Moses at the burning bush. In Exodus chapter 3, when Moses encountered God at the burning bush, and God said, go to Pharaoh, tell the people that I've sent you to deliver them, and so forth, and Moses said, well, what if they ask what God sent me, and what's your name, what name shall I tell them? Sent me. And God said, tell them, I am, has sent you.

I am that I am. And many people believe that Jesus is here referring back to that incident. I am was the name of God.

Now, it's possible that he was, but there's another explanation of what he's saying here. But it equally confirms he's claiming to be God.