

# Journey Into Knowing Jesus

## LESSON 9 . . . The Difference Jesus Can Make in Your Life (John 8:12-59)

NOTES

In the 1970's there was a hit country western song entitled, "What a Difference You've Made in My Life." Every Christian should be able to say that about Jesus. In chapter seven of *John*, the religious leaders tried to have Jesus arrested, but they failed. In the first eleven verses of chapter eight, their attempt to trap Jesus concerning the woman caught in the act of adultery also failed. Now in the remainder of this chapter, we find **three** differences Jesus can make in our lives, as well as the choice we have when faced with the truth about Jesus . . .

### He is the difference between light and darkness (8:12-20).

The Feast of Tabernacles is still being observed, and Jesus is teaching in the treasury area of the temple, which is in the court of the women, the second outermost court (8:20). During this feast, four huge menorahs—one at each corner in the court of the women—were lit at night to commemorate how the Lord led the Israelites with a pillar of fire at night during their wilderness wanderings (Ex 13:21). A menorah is a candelabrum with seven branches; a menorah with nine branches is used during Hanukkah. At night the great flames would illuminate the temple area and could be seen from all over Jerusalem. In the context of this dazzling display, what does Jesus say in John 8:12b?



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Jesus had already said, "*I am the bread of life*" (6:48), which means He is the source and sustainer of spiritual life. In saying He is the "*light of the world*" Jesus is claiming to be God, for in the Bible *light* symbolizes the presence of God. For example, what do we read in Psalm 27:1a?

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As our Light, Jesus enables us to distinguish between truth and falsehood because He gives us spiritual understanding and reveals God to us. The Pharisees challenge Jesus and say His witness alone is not true (Jn 8:13). According to Mosaic Law, two or three witnesses were required to establish a fact in court (Deut. 17:6).

Jesus replies that His divine claims are above natural and legal standards (8:14-15a). Then, in essence Jesus says, "You want two witnesses; there

are two.” He says: “*I am the one who bears witness about myself, and the Father who sent me bears witness about me*” (8:18). The Pharisees are mystified and immediately ask, “*Where is your father?*” Jesus responds: “*You know neither me nor my Father. If you knew me, you would know my Father also*” (8:19). Their unwillingness to *know* Jesus kept them from truly knowing the *Father*. This means, if we want to know God, we can only get to know Him through Jesus. When we get to know Jesus, we get to know God. Knowing God through Jesus brings *light* into our lives. How does Proverbs 4:19 describe those who do not *know* God?

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The word *stumble* means their lives are a mess—relationally, emotionally, vocationally, or spiritually. Though they may have a lot of money and be successful, people who don’t know Jesus live in *darkness*. They think if they can make more money, become more successful, have another relationship, drink a little more, etc., life will make sense. Then, they can get out of the *darkness*. However, without Jesus they just *stumble* through life. Jesus makes the difference in our lives between **light and darkness**, and . . .



### **He is the difference between life and death (8:21-30).**

Now Jesus tells the Pharisees He is going away and where He is going they cannot come (8:21-22). What does Jesus tell the Jews in John 8:24b?

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In Greek, Jesus said, “If you do not believe that I AM (EGO EIMI, ego ay-mee’), you will die in your sins.” The word “He” after “I am” (KJV, NKJV, NASB, ESV) is not in the Greek text and is therefore italicized in most versions. The Jewish leaders know the Old Testament well and understand Jesus is referring to the name of God given in Exodus 3, when God speaks to Moses from the burning bush. Moses asks God what he should say when the people ask him the name of his God. What does God tell Moses to say (Exodus 3:14)?



The name *I AM* is a verb that cannot be translated into English because it is all three tenses at once. It means He is the God who has always been, who

is now, and who will always be. Jesus is saying if we don't believe He is the eternal God, we will die in our sins.

The Pharisees ask Jesus who He is, and Jesus tells them He is who He has always claimed to be (Jn 8:25). He then says He has much more to say and His purpose for coming is to tell the world the message of the One who sent Him. However, His hearers don't understand He is referring to the Father (8:26-27). Just as a deaf person cannot fully appreciate music, an unbeliever cannot understand spiritual things.

Now Jesus tells them they will see the ultimate proof of who He is when He is *lifted up* (8:28a). The people of Jesus' day understood to be *lifted up* was to be crucified. Jesus being *lifted up* on the cross was His final revelation of who He is, because three days later He would rise from the dead. As Jesus speaks, *many believed in him* (8:30). Yet, in spite of the evidence of His miracles and His powerful teaching, the vast majority of people refuse to believe.

Jesus is not only the difference between **light and darkness, life and death**, but also . . .

### **He is the difference between freedom and bondage (8:31-47).**

The animosity toward Jesus grows more intense as the religious leaders defend themselves. Knowing some of the new followers would not follow Him very long, what does Jesus say in John 8:31b?

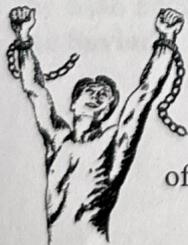
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True disciples of Jesus *continue* to follow Him. There is an old saying, "A faith that fizzles before the finish had a flaw from the first." First John 2:19 expresses it like this: *They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us.* What does Jesus say about those who *continue* in John 8:32?

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The *truth* is Jesus Christ (14:6). When we get to know Jesus, we are free from the guilt of the past, free from a life without purpose, and free to break away from sin. However, the Jews fire back, saying they are descendants of Abraham and have never been in bondage to anyone.

Therefore, they want to know why Jesus says He can set them free (8:33). How does Jesus respond in verse 34c?

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The very act of sin reveals we are enslaved to sin; otherwise we wouldn't sin. Sin is a cruel master, but our Lord says, "*So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed*" (8:36). The Jews think of themselves as being part of God's family because they are descendants of Abraham, so they remind Jesus they have Abraham as their father. Jesus responds that if they were true descendants of Abraham, they would be like Abraham and listen to God. Instead, they want to kill the One who comes from God, something Abraham would never do (8:39-40). Being a descendant of Abraham is not a big deal. How does Jesus reveal this in Matthew 3:9c?

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No individual has ever become a child of God based on biological descent. Growing up in a Christian home doesn't make you a Christian anymore than being born in a kitchen makes you a biscuit or growing up on a university campus makes you a professor.

Jesus can make the difference in your life between **light and darkness, life and death, and freedom and bondage**. However, when faced with these truths about Jesus, you have only two choices . . .

### **Cast stones or cling to the Savior (8:48-59).**

Because of Jesus' teaching, the Jews, in words of hostility, ask Jesus: "*Who do you make yourself out to be?*" (8:53c). In response, Jesus says something mind-boggling. What is it (8:56)?

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Abraham lived about 2,000 years before Christ, so how could he see Christ's day? I believe Abraham saw Christ's day when he went to sacrifice his son Isaac. God tells Abraham to take his *only son* Isaac, whom he loves, and go the mountain range of Moriah. There he is to sacrifice Isaac as a burnt offering (Gen. 22:2). It is significant God says Isaac is Abraham's *only son* since Ishmael is also Abraham's son through Hagar. However, Isaac is the *only* son of promise. Isaac is not married nor does he have children, so without Isaac, God's promise to multiply Abraham's seed would be impossible.

Abraham goes to Moriah, builds an altar, and binds Isaac. Then, he stands over his *only son* with his knife raised to sacrifice him. At this moment, the angel of the Lord calls out from heaven and tells Abraham not to harm Isaac. Abraham looks up and sees a ram caught in a thicket. He takes the ram and offers it as a sacrifice instead of Isaac (Gen. 22:11-13). How could Abraham be willing to sacrifice the *only son* through whom God would fulfill all His promises? How does Hebrews 11:19a answer this question?

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But there is more. When the test is over and God has provided a ram for the sacrifice, Abraham calls the name of the place, *The LORD will provide*, or JEHOVAH JIREH (Gen. 22:14a). Then, we read, "*On the mount of the LORD it shall be provided*" (22:14b). What do we read about Mount Moriah in 2 Chronicles 3:1a?

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JEHOVAH JIREH is the symbolic name for Mount Moriah, where Jerusalem sits today. On Mount Moriah there is a hill where Jesus was crucified, providing the sacrifice that paid the penalty for the sins of the world.

Though Abraham didn't understand it all, on Mount Moriah he received a vague picture of the coming death and resurrection of God's only Son. He knew some day the Lord would provide a sacrifice for the sins of the world in the region of Mount Moriah. So, he saw Jesus' *day*; but even more shocking, what does Jesus say in John 8:58c?

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This means before Abraham was born, Jesus already existed eternally because He is the great I AM come to earth in flesh and blood. After this statement, the Jews pick up stones to throw at Jesus, but He slips away and leaves the temple (8:59). So, when faced with the truth about who Jesus is, you have only two choices: **cast stones or cling to the Savior** (Mt 12:30).

Jesus can make the difference in your life between **light and darkness, life and death, and freedom and bondage**. However, when confronted with the truth about Jesus, you only have two choices: **cast stones or cling to the Savior**.

