

*John 8:31-59. When Jesus claimed to be the light of the world, many seem to have believed Him and were about to turn on their leaders. Yet, as Jesus continued teaching, the people turned on Him instead. They believed they already had the truth and knew freedom as God's chosen people. They were offended and would hear no more.*

Error and astronomy. It was once a frustrating science because no one could accurately predict much of anything. The Babylonians had amassed centuries of data. The Greeks studied it and split into two school of thought—those who said everything revolves around the earth and those who said everything revolves around the sun.

Neither side was able to predict much until philosophy broke the stalemate. Man *must* be at the center of the universe with the sun and planets moving around him in giant circles. Geocentrism—it had to be right, and it was accepted as fact for 2,000 years.

Copernicus said the earth revolves around the sun, but he couldn't prove it. It was just a theory until Galileo stepped onto the scene in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. What he saw with a telescope made sense only if the sun was at the center of the solar system. It was hard to refute what he had seen with his eyes, and it ignited a firestorm that nearly cost the man his life.

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**TRUTH MAY BE FRIGHTENING, BUT IT IS FREEING.**

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Most Europeans plugged their ears to Galileo. What he saw meant something, but even then he couldn't predict how the celestial bodies move. Kepler, however, could. Bodies don't move around the sun in circles, but ellipses. And with that, astronomers could predict the location of the planets. Truth was liberating, but it frightened many to think man wasn't at the center of the universe.

If being wrong about the universe only mattered as much as losing a card game, no one would've cared. To the degree that it makes a difference, finding out the truth can be terrifying. Some in the days of Kepler faced that fear and accepted the facts. Others closed their eyes and ears as if nothing had changed. We find something similar when Jesus was at the Feast of Booths here.

At the core of the crowd's faith was their link to Abraham. Jesus challenged it, the people hardened their hearts, and they tried to stone Him (John 8:59).

Truth stood in the people's midst. Rather than receive a right lens to understand God and spiritual realities, the crowd tenaciously held onto error. Sadly, no number of miracles or teachings mattered, for the people refused to be corrected.

**THIS ISN'T WHAT WE SIGNED UP FOR...**

The crowds had just heard a back-and-forth debate between Jesus and the Pharisees (John 8:12-29). Jesus claimed to be the Light. The Pharisees disagreed. Jesus responded, and none of the leaders understood. He told them to repent, and they mocked Him. Rather than side with their leaders, the people sided with Jesus. It seems they believed in Him (John 8:30).

Why would the crowd rise up against the Pharisees? It was a bold move, but keep in mind the Pharisees were no friends of the people. They taught but considered them an "accursed" bunch whom they wouldn't even touch (John 7:49). No doubt the people loved seeing Jesus take their leaders to task. Yet, as His heat turned upon them, their affection turned to contempt.

One moment the people seem to believe, the next their ready to stone Jesus (John 8:51). What kind of belief acts like this? A false kind. It's the kind of belief that the devil possesses (John 8:44; James 2:19), which isn't a saving kind of belief.

This particular crowd thought they were spiritually fine. After all, Abraham was their father. So, they came to Jesus on political terms expecting Him to lead a rebellion and start a glorious age of wonder for Israel. That's what messiah is supposed to do, right?

The crowd had an agenda, and they became angry when Jesus wasn't what they expected of messiah. Jesus has His own agenda, and one must either give up his own or stop following (Luke 9:23). The crowd stopped following.

**WHO WAS ABRAHAM?**

Jesus said these people weren't free and didn't understand Abraham (John 8:33, 39). They became livid, because each one was a child of Abraham and proud of it. None considered themselves in need of grace. No one thought of himself as being in spiritual bondage like the pagans. *We're God's people! We're not Gentiles or Samaritans.* They believed their connection to Abraham set them free; everyone else in the world needed their connection to him.

# Truth and Freedom

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God chose Abraham early in the second millennium BC to be the father of His people (Gen 12:1-3). Most importantly, Abraham was declared righteous by God due to his faith (Gen 15:6).

Fast forward to the first century AD, and we find many who trusted that belonging to Abraham would make them righteous as well. The root problem with the crowd in John 8 was their faith. They believed in their connection to Abraham for salvation. They didn't believe in the messiah.

It isn't so different today, really. Many Christians believe in Jesus but cite the date of their baptism as proof of salvation. Others point to a card signed at a young age or a time they responded to an altar call. The issue is this: Why do you believe God will let you into Heaven? Hopefully your faith rests in nothing short of Jesus' blood and His righteousness.

## TRUTH AND FREEDOM

*John 8:31-32—“If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”*

Jesus knew from the outset that talking about truth and freedom would set the crowd off, but He did it anyway. He needed to if these people were ever to be saved. They liked what He had to say and agreed with Him to a point, but wouldn't become followers. So, what makes a true follower? What is a true believer? Jesus says it's a person who abides in Jesus' word (John 8:31).

John elaborated upon this in some of his epistles. There were those in the first century who claimed to be in the light, have the truth, and be close to God. They were known as Gnostics, many of whom believed they could do with their bodies whatever they liked and still be Christians. Were they right? Not according to John (1 John 1:6, 3:6-9, 5:18; 2 John 1:9). The pattern of their lives proved they were in darkness, not abiding in Christ, not even born of God.

A disciple wants to abide in Jesus' word. And where is that word found? The Bible. Believers are people who want to know the Book. It's their textbook to understanding the God they love and the world

He created. In it Heaven is opened, Hell is disclosed. It should fill the memory, rule the heart, and guide the feet of a believer. More than being truthful, this Book is truth (John 17:17). It alone sets man free from ignorance and error, death and judgment, sin and self.

Scripture doesn't explain mathematics or physics, but it introduces us to an orderly God who gave reason to man. It isn't a history book or a primer on philosophy. Yet, it answers where we came from, what happened to us, the solution, and the end of all things. Sit at Jesus' feet. You will find real answers to life's hardest questions.

The Bible is truth itself, the fountainhead of all that is true, the highest authority given to man (John 17:17). Standing above all else, its precepts affect all else. Use it as your lens to make sense of life. Here there is freedom in this life and the one to come.

## GREATER THAN ABRAHAM

The crowds believed they already had the truth and were free—they were children of Abraham and of God. Jesus said they were wrong on both accounts. True children of both love Jesus. (John 8:37, 39-40, 42, 56).

The masses in John 8 misplaced their faith in Abraham and were abiding by the rules of the Pharisees. Thinking they were free and needed no one, they had been deceived and were actually quite enslaved to sin (John 8:34). To be free would have meant a revolution in their entire way of thinking. It would have felt akin to renouncing Abraham, their lifeline for salvation.

Everyone understood what Jesus was implying about Himself, but never did they actually expect Him to say it. The dialogue finishes with Jesus claiming to be greater than Abraham, even equal with God Himself (John 8:58).

And how do you think that went over? Well, the people picked up stones to murder Jesus (John 8:59). They closed their eyes and ears to all the Lord said and wouldn't let go of Abraham. They would hear no more of Jesus, wouldn't know the truth and wouldn't be free.