

He is "I AM"
John 8:37-59
February 22nd, 2026

1. The Great _____ (8:37-53)
 - a. They are not acting like _____ descendants. (8:37-40)

 - b. The devil is a _____ and a _____. (8:41-45)

 - c. Jesus gives _____ and _____. (8:46-53)

2. The Great "_____" (8:54-59)

3. Applying the Word
We don't need to fear _____ because Jesus is the _____ with power even over death.

Questions for Discussion/Reflection on John 8:37-59

1. Why does the reality and presence of death still have a sobering effect on people today?
2. John 8:38 emphasizes Jesus' relationship with His Father. How do the following passages describe the relationship between Jesus and His Father? 1:18; 5:19-20, 43, 6:38; 10:30, 37-38; 12:49-50; 14:10-11; 17:4-5
3. What do you think Jesus' audience has in mind when they say, "Abraham is our father"? (8:39)
4. Trace the argument that Jesus is making in v. 42. What is the implied "if/then" statement? How does he support that in the following lines?
5. In what way was the devil a liar from the beginning? John 8:44; Gen 2:16-17; 3:4-5
6. In the context of John 8, what does it mean to keep His word in v. 51? See 8:12, 24, 30-31
7. Why do you think He returns to the topic of death in vv. 51-53? How does it pick up on themes that He has already introduced in vv. 21 and 24?
8. What is the significance of Jesus' claim in v. 58? (See Exodus 3:13-15) How does the Jewish response in v. 59 reveal that they understood what He was saying about Himself?

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Big idea: Jesus is the great I AM, sent by the Father, who alone can save us from eternal death. But those who reject Jesus show themselves aligned with the devil.

Intro

Sometimes you'll hear people say that Jesus himself never claimed to be God. They say His disciples and later followers made that claim about Him, but He didn't say it about themselves.

John 1:1-3 – In the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the Word was God...but that's John writing!

Colossians 2:9 – the fullness of deity in bodily form ... but that's Paul!

The end of John 8 sinks that argument. There could be no clearer statement that Jesus is God, coming from His own words.

But it doesn't just win us a theological argument. It matters because in the context He also claims to have power to give life so that the one who believes in Him will not taste death. Physical death will still come, but that will just be the bridge to life with Jesus and then a future resurrection.

For all of our advances, from a human perspective, death remains the great unavoidable unknown. In a culture that takes almost nothing seriously, the one time you feel the sober weight of reality is at a funeral. That only increases with time as the living develop a growing mental list of those who are no longer with them.

That's why the words and promises and identity of Jesus matter so much. If He is God, then what He says even about death is true. And if He says He can rescue us from death, that is true.

1. The Great **Contrast** (8:37-53)

a. They are not acting like **Abraham's** descendants. (8:37-40)

i. The Jewish people trace their identity back to God's call of Abraham in Genesis 12.

1. **Gen. 12:1-3** Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go forth from your country, And from your relatives And from your father's house, To the land which I will show you; ² And I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing; ³ And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed."

ii. The line of descent went from Abraham to Isaac to Jacob and then to the 12 tribes of Israel. They prided themselves on being Abraham's descendants.

iii. They are his descendants, genetically, but he is not their "father," spiritually because they are not doing what Abraham did.

iv. If they are Abraham's children, they should do the deeds of Abraham (v. 39)

1. When God called Abraham to leave his family city of Ur, he obeyed, even though he didn't know what the future held.

2. When God promised Abraham a land, a nation, and a blessing, he believed God.

- a. **Gen. 15:5-6** ⁵ And He took him outside and said, "Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be." ⁶ Then he believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.

3. Abraham was not a perfect man. His sins and doubts are recorded in scripture as well as his obedience and trust.
 - v. **Romans 2:28-29** For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. ²⁹ But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God.
 - vi. Instead, they seek to kill Jesus. (vv. 37, 40), which Abraham did not do.
 - vii. They are doing the deeds of their “father,” not Abraham, but the devil himself.
- b. The devil is a **liar** and a **murderer**. (8:41-45)
- i. He hinted at it in v. 38 (you do the things you heard from your father) and v. 41 (you are doing the deeds of your father).
 1. But they object – Abraham is our father (genetically) and God is our Father (spiritually)
 - ii. Because they seek to kill him and reject the truth, they are not aligning with Abraham/God but with the devil.
 - iii. Satan has been against God since the beginning.
 1. He was a murderer from the beginnings (v. 44a)
 - a. Tempting Adam and Eve to sin against God and therefore bringing death into the world followed quickly by the first murder of Abel by his brother, Cain.
 2. He is a liar (v. 44b)
 - a. Gen 2:17 – God said you will surely die
 - b. The devil said, “you will not surely die”
 - i. Either God or the devil was lying.
 - c. He speaks from his own nature, because he is a liar.
 - i. The NIV puts it poetically but accurately, that when he lies he speaks his native tongue.
 3. If they are trying to kill Him without just cause and are rejecting truth when He speaks it, who are they aligning themselves with?
- c. Jesus gives **life** and **truth**. (8:46-53)
- i. They can’t convict Him of sin, because there is nothing to convict Him of (v. 46a)
 - ii. If He speaks truth, why don’t they believe it? (v. 46b)
 - iii. If they were “of God” they would hear and believe (v. 47)
 1. Goes back to the need for God to give a new heart, with new desires, and new ears to hear.
 2. They don’t like it (v. 48)
 - a. They accuse him of being a Samaritan (a major insult) and having a demon (crazy).
 - b. Josh Moody: Jesus has tried to show them that their spiritual situation is genuinely serious; to reject the accusation, they resort to name-calling and spiritual mudslinging. It was one of the most common tactics against Jesus.

He tried to save prostitutes: he must be immoral. He was a friend of sinners: he must be a sinner. He had a ministry to Samaritans: he must be from the devil's own country.

- iv. The one who keeps Jesus' word will never see death (v. 51)
 1. True belief evidenced by continuing (8:31)
 2. Rather than taking life, Jesus gives life – eternal life.
 3. Death is separation.
 - a. They will still die physically (the physical part of man , the body, is separated from the spiritual part of man, the soul)
 - i. If you've been at a viewing, you know the experience of seeing a body but knowing the soul/spirit of the person is gone – separated. There's a shell there that no longer holds the person.
 - b. But they will not die spiritually (the separation of the soul from God)
 - i. **John 11:25** Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies,
 - ii. Eternal life with Jesus and resurrected life on the last day.
 - iii. **Philippians 1:21, 23** For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain....²³ But I am hard-pressed from both *directions*, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for *that* is very much better;
 - iv. **2 Corinthians 5:8** we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord.
- v. This is who Jesus is – life and truth – but Satan has been convincing people from the beginning that God doesn't really have their best interests in mind.
 1. "He's keeping things from you. You won't surely die. You won't find happiness there. You'll be stifled, controlled. Away from God is where you'll find freedom."
 2. But Jesus says, "Continue in my word and you'll know the truth and the truth will make you free, I'll set you free indeed. I'll give you life. I'll give you truth."
- vi. They are once again skeptical (vv. 52-53)
 1. Abraham died, the prophets died
 2. Surely you are not greater than Abraham, are you?
 - a. Wording expects a negative answer
 - b. Irony again in John in that we know the answer is the opposite of what they expect, Yes, he is greater than Abraham!
 - c. **John 4:11-12** She said to Him, "Sir, You have nothing to draw with and the well is deep; where then do You get that living water? ¹² "You are not greater than our father Jacob, are You, who gave us the well, and drank of it himself and his sons and his cattle?"
 3. Whom do you make yourself out to be?
 - a. The key question! Whom do you make yourself out to be?!
 - b. His answer makes them pick up rocks in an attempt to stone him to death.

2. The Great "**I AM**" (8:54-59)

- a. The Father is the one who "glorifies" the Son.
 - i. They say God is their Father, and yet they don't embrace the Father's Son.
 1. I have a particular affection for my friends' children, even if I don't know the children. Why? Because I love their dads so I love their kids.
- b. Is He greater than Abraham?
 - i. Well, Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad.
 - ii. Abraham would have known the promise in Genesis that a descendant of Eve would crush the serpent (a foreshadowing of the gospel). He would have known God's promise that through Him all the nations would be blessed. He didn't know details of how God would fulfill that, but he looked ahead by faith and was glad.
 - iii. It's also possible that He has in mind the "angel of the Lord" appearances to Abraham in Gen 18 and 22.
- c. Their objection shows they didn't yet understand who they were talking to.
 - i. You're not yet 50 and Abraham lived 2,000 years ago, have you seen Abraham? (and has he seen you?)
- d. What follows is a clear appropriation of OT language to identify Jesus as God.
 - i. Before Abraham was born, I am
 1. The grammar sounds awkward, doesn't it?
 2. If He wanted to say that He was older than Abraham, which would still have been an astounding claim, you would expect Him to use a past tense verb, "Before Abraham was born, I was." But He uses present tense, "I am."
 3. **Exodus 3:14-15** God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM"; and He said, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'" ¹⁵ God, furthermore, said to Moses, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.' This is My name forever, and this is My memorial-name to all generations.
 - a. It is a name that speaks to God's self-existence and eternity. He is the God who is, who exists, who is real, who has no beginning, who is the very nature of "being."
 - b. YHWH is the literal rendering of it. Jehovah is adapted from this by combining the consonants from YHWH and the vowels from Adonai.
 - ii. Am I greater than Abraham? I am the God of Abraham.
 1. They understood what He was saying. How do we know? They tried to kill him with rocks.
 2. **Leviticus 24:16** 'Moreover, the one who blasphemes the name of the LORD shall surely be put to death; all the congregation shall certainly stone him. The alien as well as the native, when he blasphemes the Name, shall be put to death.
 3. They understood Him, they just didn't believe Him.
 4. The British magazine, *The Spectator*, did an article on a survey of 14- to 17-year-olds. Drawing on five reading groups, in which teenagers reacted to passages of

scripture traditionally understood as conveying 'good news', Among other responses, after reviewing passages of scripture many stated that Jesus has a "God complex."

- a. Correct!
- b. CS Lewis very famously summarized this in his "Lord, Liar, Lunatic" argument. If Jesus clearly claims to be God, He is either:
 - i. Right, in which case we should worship Him as Lord
 - ii. He is wrong, in which case He is either lying or crazy.
- c. His audience in John 8 chose door number 2, "He's a liar and must be killed for blasphemy."

3. Applying the Word

- a. We don't need to fear **death** because Jesus is the **living God** with power even over death.

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