# John 8:31-59 Liar, Lunatic or Lord

At Jesus’ trial, Pilot asked, “What is Truth”. His question is echoed by many people each day. Trends in answering this question have been categorized as different philosophical eras. Up until the 16th century, Medieval thought largely followed the ideas of Plato, Aristotle, Anselm and Aquinas, believing there are things that we can learn about reality through thought and experimentation, but that ultimate reality lies beyond our ability to sense. In the 16th century, this was replaced by the Classicist era which lasted through the 18th century and believed that the most important things had all been understood by the great philosophers of the past and that we just needed to contemplate their writings to understand the world.

In the 18th century, the Enlightenment argued that rational thought could determine everything we need to know about truth and morality. They still held that morality was important, but tried to assert that they could determine what was moral by using logic and thought. This was ironic as the enlightenment thinkers rejected the light of God in exchange for the darkness of their own thoughts.

When it became apparent that Enlightenment thought was not a viable system, a new philosophy arose in the 19th century that was called Romanticism. The Romanticist thinkers argued that we can determine truth and morality through our emotional reactions. Again, they still believed that morality is important and that logical though was useful for the material world, but rejected logical thought as the primary source of philosophical truth. Again, Ironically, they rejected the light of God’s love for the darkness of sensual experience.

In the late 19th and early 20th century, philosophers responded to the Enlightenment and Romanticism with the Modernist movement. In spite of its name, the modernist movement actually looked to the past, believing that knowledge and morality come from learning the experiences of the past. Modernists also tended to base things on mechanical systems, advancing science and engineering faster than any other period of history. While modernists still believed in morality, they treated God as irrelevant, not only rejecting God’s light, but often rejecting God’s existence.

Toward the end of the 20th Century and now in the 21st century, modernist thought has been replaced by postmodern thought. In America’s post-modern culture, many people deny that there is any such thing as absolute truth. 20 years ago, they applied this to philosophical and religious truth. When it comes to religion, they would say, “That’s true for you but not for me.” This is a logical fallacy, nothing can be true and false at the same time, but it was an attempt to sidestep absolutes and let each person live life as they desired, not hindered by things such as morality or God’s commands.

In recent years, they have started applying postmodern thought to every area of life. If you have heard someone say that Math is racist or that Logical Thought is only a western construct, they are using postmodern thought. Post moderns have rejected the other ways of finding truth, but have also rejected the very existence of truth.

In this passage, we continue the discussion of Jesus being the light of the world. While the word light is not used in this passage, the concepts of truth, freedom, and sonship are all used in the context of Jesus saying, “I am the light of the World.” From this discussion we learn that we are either sons or we are slaves. We are legitimate children of God through Jesus or we are illegitimate heirs of the devil. We also see that Jesus’s claims about himself are either divine or demonic, there is no room in between.

## Sons or Slaves John 8:31-39

“**31** ¶ To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. **32** Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." **33** They answered him, "We are Abraham’s descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?" **34** Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. **35** Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. **36** So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. **37** I know you are Abraham’s descendants. Yet you are ready to kill me, because you have no room for my word. **38** ¶ I am telling you what I have seen in the Father’s presence, and you do what you have heard from your father." **39** "Abraham is our father," they answered. "If you were Abraham’s children," said Jesus, "then you would do the things Abraham did.

Jesus starts by telling them that knowing facts is not enough. If you know His teaching but don’t follow it then you don’t truly know it. It is only when you hold to His teaching that you can know the truth. This may be one of Jesus’s most famous statements, but also the most misinterpreted. “You will know the truth and the truth will set you free.” This is not talking about knowing facts. This is about knowing Jesus. Jesus is the truth that we must know. This is emphasized when Jesus says, if the Son set you free, you will be free indeed.

The Jews object, not to Jesus teaching or being truth, but to His implying that they are not free. Check the stupidity of their response, “We are descendants of Abraham and have never been slaves of anyone.” For 400 years the descendants of Abraham were slaves in Egypt. Even as they spoke the nation of was a vassal state of Rome, by definition meaning their entire nation was enslaved to Rome. But Jesus is not talking about physical slavery, Jesus is talking about slavery to sin. We like to think we are free beings, but without Christ’s action, we cannot make a decision not to sin, we are bound to sin.

Jesus then rubs their nose in their own claim…if Abraham was your father you would do the things that Abraham does. Being a son is far more about imitation than genetics. Sure, they genetically are descendants of Abraham, but if they have rejected the principles that Abraham espoused, can they really be treating him as their father.

Are you a slave to sin or a child of God? Even if you are a child of God, you can still be stuck in the habits developed as a slave to sin. If we follow Jesus’s teaching and know Him, then He will also free us from the remaining ties of sin. Do you need to be freed?

## Legitimate? John 8:40-45

**40** As it is, you are determined to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. Abraham did not do such things. **41** You are doing the things your own father does." "We are not illegitimate children," they protested. "The only Father we have is God himself." **42** Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and now am here. I have not come on my own; but he sent me. **43** Why is my language not clear to you? Because you are unable to hear what I say. **44** You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father’s desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies. **45** Yet because I tell the truth, you do not believe me!

Once again, Jesus says that they are the children of their father. The Jews double down and proclaim that they have no Father except God. 10 seconds before they proclaimed Abraham was their father, now they say they have NO father except God Himself. Like many people, they are blind to their own hypocrisy.

Jesus then gives us a test to see if we are legitimate children of God. Legitimate children love the father’s other children and specifically the Son. They recognize that since Jesus is sent by the Father, He represents the Father. Imagine a person comes into our church and says that he represents the President or the Governor and that there is a special message for you directly from that leader. They even show you ID proving that they have been sent. If you said to this messenger, “I love that leader, but I don’t want to hear any message that they sent through you,” would that show respect for that leader?

Jesus then shows that we are children of the one we follow and that the Jews are following the devil in that they revel in lies and would rather believe the lies than the truth. Sometimes the truth is uncomfortable. It is natural to question truth that seems uncomfortable, but we must not be obstinate and let our dislike of the truth keep us from believing the truth. If God reveals something about yourself that you don’t like, are you willing to accept it?

If God calls you to serve Him, you are safer serving Him than going your own way, but you may have struggles. On her trip in January, Amy met with people serving the Lord in a country I cannot name. They have had to be in physical danger. They have been without power. There have been riots and revolutions right outside their door. When COVID hit, the country they are in didn’t even have on ventilator for the entire country. God calling them to serve there was a hard truth, but a truth they willingly accepted. If God shows you something are you willing to believe, even if you don’t like what that belief would lead to?

## Divine or Demonic John 8:46-59

**46** ¶ Can any of you prove me guilty of sin? If I am telling the truth, why don’t you believe me? **47** He who belongs to God hears what God says. The reason you do not hear is that you do not belong to God." **48** The Jews answered him, "Aren’t we right in saying that you are a Samaritan and demon-possessed?" **49** "I am not possessed by a demon," said Jesus, "but I honor my Father and you dishonor me. **50** I am not seeking glory for myself; but there is one who seeks it, and he is the judge. **51** ¶ I tell you the truth, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death." **52** At this the Jews exclaimed, "Now we know that you are demon-possessed! Abraham died and so did the prophets, yet you say that if anyone keeps your word, he will never taste death. **53** Are you greater than our father Abraham? He died, and so did the prophets. Who do you think you are?" **54** Jesus replied, "If I glorify myself, my glory means nothing. My Father, whom you claim as your God, is the one who glorifies me. **55** Though you do not know him, I know him. If I said I did not, I would be a liar like you, but I do know him and keep his word. **56** Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad." **57** "You are not yet fifty years old," the Jews said to him, "and you have seen Abraham!" **58** "I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "before Abraham was born, I am!" **59** At this, they picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus hid himself, slipping away from the temple grounds.” (Joh 8:31-59 NIVUS)

Jesus says that no one can prove Him guilty of sin. This is a HUGE claim. He is not saying you can’t prove me guilty of a specific sin, He is saying you can’t prove Him guilty of any sin. This leave the Jews with a choice. They either accept that He is divine and the Messiah sent from God or they reject Him. C.S. Lewis once said:

A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic — on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg — or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God, but let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.

The Jewish leaders assert that He is demon possessed because they cannot show that He is a lunatic and they won’t accept that He is Lord. Jesus responds by asserting that He has power over death itself. The Jews see this as proof that He is demon possessed. He has already shown how He has power to cure uncurable sickness, He has already turned water into wine, He has already fed the 5,000, but they are unwilling to believe that He has power over death. Again this returns to the theme of Jesus being the light. Psalm 23 talks about traveling through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, but Isaiah 9: 2 talks of the light overcoming the shadow of death.

“**2** The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.”

That great light is the Glory of the Lord in the Light of the World…Jesus.

Jesus now proclaims that Abraham rejoiced at seeing His day. Abraham lived about 2000 years before Jesus. Imagine that, a man who existed as long before Jesus as we exist after Jesus rejoiced at the expectation of the Messiah’s coming! The Jews cannot accept this, Jesus is less than 50 years old, so how could Abraham possibly rejoice to see His day. Once again, Jesus is saying that He is God. When the Jews ridicule His statement, He says, “Before Abraham was, I AM”. The word carries the sense of, Before Abraham existed I had already been.

When Moses asked God what His name was,

“God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: ‘I AM has sent me to you.’"” (Ex 3:14 NIVUS)

God’s name is I AM. When Exodus 3:14 was translated into Greek, I Am was translated as εγω ειμι. Jesus said, “before Abraham was, εγω ειμι.” There was no doubt that Jesus was claiming to be God and they either had to accept that or kill Him for blasphemy. They chose to kill Him, but His time was not yet come.

When someone tells you that Jesus was just a good teacher, can you show them that He is not a good teacher unless He is also Lord?

# John 8:31-59 Liar, Lunatic or Lord

## Sons or \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ John 8:31-39

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ is the truth that we must know.

Jesus is talking about slavery to \_\_\_\_\_\_.

## \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_? John 8:40-45

Legitimate children \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ the father’s other children and specifically the \_\_\_\_\_\_.

If God reveals something about yourself that you \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ like, are you \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to accept it?

If God shows you something are you willing to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, even if you don’t like what that belief would \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to?

## Divine or \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ John 8:46-59

You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon or you can fall at his feet and call him \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and God,
 C.S. Lewis

Τhe people walking in darkness have seen a great \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_; on those living in the land of the shadow of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ a light has dawned.” Isaiah 9:2

God said to Moses, “I AM WHO \_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_ This is what you are to say to the Israelites: ‘\_\_ \_\_\_\_ has sent me to you.’” Exodus 3:14

When someone tells you that Jesus was just a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, can you show them that He is not a good teacher unless He is also Lord?