

# Believe

JOHN

[MESSAGE](#)[STUDY GUIDE](#)[GROUP MATERIAL](#)[SONGS](#)

## Examining the text & our hearts:

*Bible Reading: John 8:12-30*

12 Jesus spoke to them again: "I am the light of the world. Anyone who follows me will never walk in the darkness but will have the light of life."

13 So the Pharisees said to him, "You are testifying about yourself. Your testimony is not valid."

14 "Even if I testify about myself," Jesus replied, "my testimony is true, because I know where I came from and where I'm going. But you don't know where I come from or where I'm going."

15 You judge by human standards. I judge no one.

16 And if I do judge, my judgment is true, because it is not I alone who judge, but I and the Father who sent me.

17 Even in your law it is written that the testimony of two witnesses is true.

18 I am the one who testifies about myself, and the Father who sent me testifies about me."

19 Then they asked him, "Where is your Father?"

"You know neither me nor my Father," Jesus answered. "If you knew me, you would also know my Father."

20 He spoke these words by the treasury, while teaching in the temple. But no one seized him, because his hour had not yet come.

21 Then he said to them again, "I'm going away; you will look for me, and you will die in your sin. Where I'm going, you cannot come."

22 So the Jews said again, "He won't kill himself, will he, since he says, 'Where I'm going, you cannot come'?"

23 "You are from below," he told them, "I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world."

24 Therefore I told you that you will die in your sins. For if you do not believe that I am he, you will die in your sins."

25 "Who are you?" they questioned.

"Exactly what I've been telling you from the very beginning," Jesus told them.

26 "I have many things to say and to judge about you, but the one who sent me is true, and what I

have heard from him—these things I tell the world.”

27 They did not know he was speaking to them about the Father.

28 So Jesus said to them, “When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own. But just as the Father taught me, I say these things.

29 The one who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone, because I always do what pleases him.”

30 As he was saying these things, many believed in him.

### **I. This Gospel has an underlying theme of a court proceedings**

- “The entire sweep of John’s narrative drama takes the form of a cosmic trial between God & the world, with Jesus at the center.” [Robert Maccini, *Her Testimony is True*, p. 32]
- “The medium for [John’s] drama is the forensic confrontation, the lawsuit between God & the world in the person of Jesus Christ...The trial motif in John’s Gospel is not just one theological theme among others, but rather, ‘It is judgment in action, judgment as story or drama’ (J. Ashton).” [Robert Maccini, *Her Testimony is True*, p. 35]
- “This monumental lawsuit —‘the great trial’— that seems to engage the life of Jesus—is played out again & again in smaller scale legal disputes throughout the drama. ...The story is repeated over & over. No one can miss it...The lawsuit scheme runs through the overarching frame of John’s story.” [Robert Maccini, *Her Testimony is True*, p. 35]
- “The dispute begun in John 7 continues into John 8, as does the forensic [legal, trial] atmosphere, which increasingly thickens. Jesus claims to be the light of the world, the Pharisees impugn his testimony, & he contends for its validity, citing the law of evidence & its imperative for 2 (or 3) witnesses. Jesus defends the legitimacy of his judgment based on his [divine] origins, counterclaims bankruptcy for his adversaries’ judgment, & the argument then returns to credentials...The argument extends from Jn. 8:21 to the end of the chapter.” [Robert Maccini, *Her Testimony is True*, p. 41]
- “[In John there is] the pervasive use of courtroom terms (such as “confess,” “deny,” “judge,” “witness,” & “testimony”: e.g., 1:7-8, 15, 19-20, 31-36; 5:30-31), by the ominous portrayal of Jewish leaders, & by the scenes in which Jesus & others seem to be on trial (1:19-28; 5:16-47; 8:12-20; 9:13-34)...” [Craig R. Koester, “4th Gospel in a 3-Year Lectionary,” *Word & World*, V. 10, #1 (1990) pp. 22-23]

### **II. The Accusers – Pharisees and Jews (8:13, 22)**

#### **A. The previous accusations**

1. Jesus healed on the Sabbath – 5:16
2. Jesus called God his Father – 5:18
3. Jesus is from Galilee and so can’t be the Messiah – 7:52

#### **B. The present accusations**

1. Jesus declares “I am the light of the world.” – 8:12
  - “The two terms [light & life] from the prologue come together again in Jesus’ witness that provokes the trial scene in 8:12-59... Life is the positive verdict produced by the judgment of the light.” [Andrew T. Lincoln, *Truth on Trial*, p. 146]
2. Your testimony is not true/valid – 8:13
3. Who is your Father? – 8:19
4. Who are you? – 8:25

### **III. The Accused – Jesus**

#### **A. His testimony – 8:14-16**

1. My testimony is true
2. I know where I come from
3. I know where I am going

4. I don't judge anyone

5. If I judge, it is true

- “Jesus was not contradicting Himself in the span of two verses – first not judging, then judging. Rather, He passed judgment on no one of His own accord; His judgment was always mirroring the Father’s judgment (v. 16). The Apologetics Study Bible
- Jesus does not judge by superficial criteria. But that does not mean that he does not judge in any sense (v. 26; 5:27; 9:39) NIV Zondervan Study Bible

B. His defense

6. I have two witnesses – me and my Father – 8:17-18

- In response “the Pharisees start an argument about what constitutes valid testimony in a lawsuit. When Jesus promises that whoever follows him will have the light of life [8:12], the [Pharisees,] specialists in Scripture take exception, because they understand themselves to be the exclusive custodians of God’s Word, which is ‘a lamp to the feet & a light to the path’ (Ps. 119:105). Instead of receiving, believing, & following Jesus, they reject what he says & set off on a side trail of Scriptural interpretation.” [Lamar Williamson, Preaching...John, p. 103]
- “On occasion Jesus accedes, at least formally, to the legal demands that there should be more than one witness in his case (cf. 5:31; 8:17). But even such instances serve to highlight that ultimately Jesus is testifying about himself and his relation to God. Despite the law, such testimony is to be deemed to be true and self-authenticating because of Jesus’ unique identity (8:14). At the same time the complete dependence of the Son as agent on the Father as authorizer enables their witness, like that of YHWH and the servant in Isa. 43:10, to be depicted as a collaborative one— “I am the one who witnesses about myself and the Father who sent me witnesses about me” (8:18).” [Andrew T. Lincoln, Life of Jesus as Testimony: Divine Courtroom & Gospel of John, p. 154]

#### IV. The Judge – Jesus

- “In John...*Jesus appears to be on trial, but is in reality the judge*...To be able to see that Jesus is the judge, however...one must see the difference between appearance & reality. Jesus insists ‘do not judge by appearances, but judge justly’ (7:24). Later, Jesus will add (8:15), ‘You judge by human standards; I judge no one. Yet, even if I do judge my judgment is true for it is not I alone who judge, but the Father who sent me.’ Proper judgment distinguishes between appearance & reality/truth. And, in John 7 & 8 those who judge by appearances, are judging from the Law ... [To them] Jesus is obviously guilty & is condemned. But those who judge Jesus through the eyes of faith can see beyond appearances...He insists that his unity with the Father, who never ceases working, makes him an exception to [the Sabbath] rule. *Jesus is an exception to the rule about witnesses as well, because of his nearness to the Father* (8:14) ...To those whose perspective is based on appearances, Jesus is a mere mortal... But, to those who see beyond appearances & through the eyes of faith, Jesus in no way violates the Law.” [George L. Parsenios, Rhetoric & Drama in the Johannine Lawsuit Motif, pp. 29-30]
  - “There’s a shift in the notion of Judging. [John] chapter 7 & 8:12-20 offer one perspective on judging, but 8:21-58 present another, & it’s important to notice...In both chap. 7 & in 8:12-20, Jesus’ primary activity is that of witness...Jesus insists that he does not judge (8:15)...In that latter part of 8, however, Jesus plays the role of judge in concert with the Father (8:16)...8:26. The Tabernacles Discourse in John 7-8 begins, therefore, by showing Jesus being judged, but it ends with him performing the role of judge. Judgment in John 7 & 8, therefore, involves...reversal...” [George L. Parsenios, Rhetoric & Drama in the Johannine Lawsuit Motif, p. 67]
- A. You judge by human standards/appearance – 8:15
- B. I do not judge alone, my Father and I judge – 8:16
- C. You don’t know me or my Father – 8:19
- D. You are from below, of this world – 8:23
- E. The verdict – You will die in your sins – 8:24

1. If you do not believe that I am

### V. Who is Jesus? – The “I AM”

A. Every person will one day, sooner or later, need to come to terms with who Jesus is. Cannot brush him away. What will you do with Jesus?

**• 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.**

#### C. S. Lewis

B. He is not of this world – 8:23

C. The “I AM” that we are to believe in – 8:24

1. Points to Yahweh – Exo. 3:14

God replied to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: I AM has sent me to you.”

• “I am he at one level may simply mean ‘I am the Messiah’ or the one ‘sent’ by the Father (or, in view of v. 12, ‘I am the light of the world’). The Greek phrase ego eimi simply means ‘I am’ and is used in the ordinary sense in 9:9 by a man Jesus healed. However, John is fond of using words with a double meaning (...and this verse is one of several that hint of a connection with God’s statement to Moses in Ex. 3:14, ‘I AM [Gk. Septuagint: Ego eimi] WHO I AM.’ ESV Study Bible

D. The one who will be lifted up – 8:28

1. Then they will know he is the “I AM”

• The reference to the Son of Man being lifted up is the first [3:14] of three ‘lifted up’ sayings in John’s Gospel (cf. 8:28; 12:32). All three sayings speak of the future ‘lifting up’ of the Son of Man in a typical Johannine double meaning...so that it refers to both Jesus’ death and his resurrection and exaltation to glory in heaven (cf. Acts 2:33; 5:31). ESV Study Bible

• “John is the only NT writer to use the term ‘lifted up’ in a dual sense with reference both to Jesus’ crucifixion (the literal ‘lifting up’) and to his exaltation....There is great irony in the fact that the Jews, by having Jesus crucified, are actually ‘lifting’ Jesus up.” G. K. Beale & D. A. Carson, Commentary on the NT use of the OT, p. 457

• “Jesus’ “I am” declaration here [in John 8:28] ...offers a high Christology by combining the “lifting up” motif with the divine self-identification, “I am.” Isaiah 52:13 employs “lifting up” terminology in relation to YHWH’s servant, which...[is] a type in which Jesus includes himself. Thus ...the “lifting up” of the “I am” suggests a radically novel addition to the divine identity of YHWH. For [Richard] Bauckham, this is where the evangelist is really beginning to reshape the unique divine identity of YHWH; it is not only to be found in the exaltation but also in the humiliation. Moreover, the humiliation has become part of the exaltation. This is made possible through the double meaning of “lifting up”—it refers both to the cross & to the exaltation. Bauckham stresses that this is not contrary to Jewish theology but a development intended to offer a more complete understanding of the divine identity.” [Mark R. Mayfield, Perspectives on Trial, University of Georgia (May 2010) p. 44]

E. The light of the world – 8:12

1. Anyone who follows will never walk in darkness

• Jesus is the light of the world....Jesus fulfills OT promises of the coming of the ‘light’ of salvation and the ‘light’ of God (e.g., Ex. 25:37; Lev. 24:2; Ps. 27:1; Isa. 9:2; 42:6; 49:6; John 9:5; Acts 13:47; 26:18, 23; Eph. 5:8-14; 1 John 1:5-7). ESV Study Bible

2. The followers will have the light of life.

a. Gives life, is life, springs from life, illuminates life

• “The entire earthly sphere (controlled by the ‘ruler of this world,’ Satan) is in darkness, but Jesus has come as ‘the light of the world.’ Thus those who follow him will never ‘walk in darkness but will have the light of life.’ (8:12)...In the present context ‘light of life’ could have several specific nuances, such as ‘gives life’, ‘is life’, ‘springs from life,’ or ‘illuminates life.’” G. K. Beale & D. A. Carson, Commentary

on the NT use of the OT, p. 457

3. Real followers believe. What does this mean?

- a. Believe
- b. Don't argue
- c. Don't merely agree
- d. But follow him
- i. Not the way of secular society – its morals or lack of

E.g. survey of cohabiting couples

PREPARE Assessment Survey		
35,684 dating couples		
Couple relationship	Living aprt	Cohabiting
Vitalized	51%	21%
Hamonized, conventional		
Conflicted	16%	48%

- Benefits of cohabiting before marriage disappear 1 year after marriage
- In the long-term premarital cohabiting is associated with greater risk of marital instability and less relationship satisfaction.

• Article in Journal of Family Psychology (2009)

**“Compared to married couples, cohabiting couples who eventually marry argue more, have more trouble resolving conflicts, are more insecure about their partners’ feelings, and have more problems related to their future goals.”** Annie C. Hsueh, Kristen Rahbar Morrison, Brian D. Doss

ii. Sexual immorality

**Food is for the stomach and the stomach for food,” and God will do away with both of them. However, the body is not for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. 1 Cor. 6:13**

iii. Will we take God’s standard or create our own?

• “The point of John 8:12 is **the importance of following Jesus, not arguing with or about him—just following, & so living in the light.** The real & present danger today is not so much our propensity to argue with Jesus as it is to acquiesce [agree], but not follow him. Only followers can claim the promise.” [Lamar Williamson, Preaching the Gospel of John, p. 105]

• To be a follower of Christ is to give oneself body, soul and spirit into the obedience of the Master; and to enter upon that following is to walk in the light. When we walk alone we are bound to stumble and grope, for so many of life’s problems are beyond our solution. When we walk alone we are bound to take the wrong way, because we have no secure map of life. We need the heavenly wisdom to walk the earthly way. The man who has a sure guide and an accurate map is the man who is bound to come in safety to his journey’s end. Jesus Christ is that guide; he alone possesses the map to life. To follow him is to walk in safety through life and afterwards to enter into glory. Barclay’s Daily Study Bible