

“I AM”
May 24, 2026
John 8:48-59

I. Introduction

Today’s Scripture is the last 12 verses of a rather lengthy chapter of the Gospel of John—John chapter 8. To get the context, we should really read the whole chapter, but since we don’t have time to read all of it at once, let alone consider each verse as they lead up to these concluding verses, let’s quickly review what happened earlier.

As you may remember, in **verses 1-11** Jesus returned to the Temple “**at dawn**” on the day following the Feast of Tabernacles. While He was teaching some of the people gathered there in the Court of the Women, **verse 3** says that “**the teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery.**” Under the pretense of having Jesus determine whether or not this woman should be stoned, the religious leaders felt they had finally set a trap for Jesus that couldn’t be escaped. But by emphasizing their sin and their lack of mercy and grace, Jesus turned the tables on them instead. Then, after all of her accusers had left, Jesus forgave the woman and told her in **verse 11** to “**go now and leave your life of sin.**”

In **verses 12-30**, Jesus returned to teaching those gathered around Him. Knowing that some were wondering why and how He could forgive the woman’s sin, in **verse 12** Jesus identified Himself as the sovereign God as He said, “**I AM the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.**” This was more than the self-appointed guardians of the truth could stomach, so, the Pharisees and scribes called Him a liar as they said in **verse 13**, “**Your testimony is not valid.**”

Jesus replied that His testimony was true since He was from heaven, that He was doing the work of God, and that “**my other witness is the Father, i.e., God the Father, who sent me.**” Jesus went on to say that He was going away, and they could not follow (**verse 21**). He also said that they wouldn’t understand until He had been lifted up (**verse 28**). But, in spite of the opposition of the Jewish leadership, **verse 30** says that “**even as he spoke, many put their faith in him.**”

In [verses 31-47](#), which we looked at last week, Jesus addressed those “[who had believed him](#)” ([verse 31](#)). He taught them that to be saved from an eternity in hell, they had to do more than merely believe that He was who He claimed to be—they needed to act—as He said in [verse 31](#), they needed to hold to His teachings. Or, as [Romans 10:9-10](#) says, “[If you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.](#)” Some gathered there had been misled by the religious leaders and felt that they didn’t have to do anything—their salvation was due to their bloodline, their ancestors—in [verse 33](#) they said, “[We are Abraham's descendants.](#)” Others felt that they were safe because of their works—in [verse 41](#) they said, “[The only Father we have is God himself.](#)”

With the thought of [Matthew 7:16](#) “[By their fruit you will recognize them](#)” in mind, Jesus said that their rejection of the truth, their lack of love of God, their desire to kill Him were characteristics of those who belong to the devil. Jesus didn’t beat around the bush—in [verse 44](#), He said, “[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.](#)” Jesus finished that section with a challenge to those gathered there. This challenge led to the last part of Jesus’ teaching the group gathered in the Temple—the finale so to speak. Turn to the challenge and the finale—[turn to John 8:46-59](#).

II. The Finale

A. Name Calling The finale began with some name calling. Jesus had put His reputation, His life on the line when He asked, “[Who among you can prove me guilty of any sin?](#)” This is one of the great proofs of the deity of Jesus. If anyone had had one shred of evidence, one little sin against Him, they would have used it. But they couldn’t disprove any of His statements. Peter who had lived with Jesus 24/7 for 3 years wrote years later in [1 Peter 2:22](#), “[He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.](#)” So, unable to convict Him and, being more than a little angry at Jesus for calling them “[children of the devil,](#)” they

resorted to name calling. They called Jesus a Samaritan. For a Jew to be called a Samaritan was one of the most cutting insults one Jew could hurl at another. Jesus had obviously hit a nerve.

The Jews despised the Samaritans as physical and spiritual half breeds. They were descendants of Jews who married pagans, Gentiles, after the fall of the northern kingdom. Their religion was a combination of Judaism and the pagan religions. The fancy word for this is *syncretism*. By calling Jesus a Samaritan, the Jews may have been questioning the legitimacy of Jesus' birth as a full-blooded Jew. Because He obviously did not agree with the Pharisees' interpretation of the Law, they were also labeling Him as a false teacher—a heretic. In their blindness, the Jewish leaders were confident that Jesus must be an enemy of God.

In their anger, the Jews took their accusations—their name calling—one step further by claiming that Jesus was also possessed by a demon. This was the same thing they had said about John the Baptist in [Matthew 11:18](#). This was not the first time they had said it about Jesus either—earlier in Jesus' ministry [Mark 3:22](#) says, “**And the teachers of the law who came down from Jerusalem said, "He is possessed by Beelzebul! By the prince of demons, he is driving out demons."**” And it wouldn't be the last time either, e.g., [John 10:20](#) says, “**Many of them said, 'He is demon-possessed and raving mad. Why listen to Him.'**” To say someone was demon-possessed was as good as saying that he was insane, since demon-possessed people often acted irrationally. Demonstrating their own spiritual blindness, after considering all Jesus said and did, they claimed that a demon had driven Him mad.

Resisting temptation, Jesus didn't reply in kind to their charges. As Peter wrote in [1 Peter 2:23](#), “**When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.**” Jesus didn't even dignify their racial slur with an answer. He calmly said, “**I am not possessed by a demon.**” He went on to say that “**I honor my Father.**” And no demon-possessed person could possibly honor God.

Jesus said that by dishonoring Him, the Jews were dishonoring the very God whom they claimed as their Father. In [John 5:23](#), Jesus had already said, “**He who does not honor the Son does not honor the**

Father, who sent him.” Now Jesus pointed out that unlike the Jews, “I am not seeking glory for myself,” but He was seeking the glory that belongs to God alone.

Jesus had warned them several times that they would die in their sins because of their unbelief, and now, once again, He invited them to trust His Word and “never see death.” Even to those who scornfully rejected His gospel and dishonored Him, Jesus, with mercy and grace, again offered eternal life. This is truly an example of 1 Peter 3:9, “The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.”

B. Ridicule Interpreting Jesus’ words about “never seeing death” in a literal and earthly sense, these spiritually blind Jews turned from name calling to ridicule. Abraham was dead, yet he was a godly man. The faithful prophets were also dead. So, they asked, “*Who do you think you are?*” This kind of talk could only come from someone who was demon possessed—this proved their point, Jesus was possessed.

After their scorn and ridicule, Jesus, in verse 54, calmly and patiently repeated the truth He had already stated, “If I glorify myself, my glory means nothing. My Father, whom you claim as your God, is the one who glorifies me.” By claiming to have the power over life and death, Jesus was claiming to be God. But this was not an honor He made for Himself; the Father gave it to Him. For the Jewish leaders to piously claim to know God while blaspheming and rejecting His Son was absurd. Despite all their words, Jesus said, “you do not know him.” If they didn’t know God; they were truly children of Satan. They were the ones that were deluded when they thought that they were God’s children and that Jesus was in league with the devil.

In contrast to their rejection of Him, Jesus told them, “Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad” (verse 56). Turn to Hebrews 11:8-16. Abraham didn’t receive some special vision of our Lord’s life and ministry, but God gave him the spiritual perception to “see” or anticipate these future events. He saw in his son Isaac the beginning of God’s fulfillment of His covenant. He certainly saw Calvary when he offered Isaac to God on the altar in Genesis 22. Once again Jesus contrasted His opponents’ behavior with that of their patriarch, proving that they were not Abraham’s

spiritual children. Jesus said, “Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad.”

But they wanted to murder the very One in whose coming Abraham rejoiced.

When the Pharisees and scribes questioned the ability of Abraham to see Jesus and the ability of Jesus to see Abraham, Jesus replied, “Truly, truly--I tell you the truth, before Abraham was born, I AM!” This was nothing less than a claim to full deity—Jesus was claiming to be God. As we saw in Exodus 3 a couple of weeks ago, this was the name God gave Himself: “I AM.” As the eternal God, He existed before Abraham’s time. Jesus, as God, is timeless as well. As John 1:1 says, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

C. Violence The Jewish leaders understood Jesus’ claim perfectly. There was no way that the Jews could miss the meaning of what Jesus said. In response, their hatred moved from name calling and ridicule to violence. Infuriated by what they perceived as blasphemy, they were ready to take the law into their own hands; they weren’t going to wait for Roman approval. “They picked up stones to stone him.” In spite of all the evidence they had seen and heard, the Jewish religious leaders were ready to cast stones at a blasphemer who was in fact God Himself.

D. Jesus Disappeared. Jesus didn’t protest that He had been misunderstood. Without a doubt, He was claiming to be God. Since His hour to die had not yet come, Jesus would not allow Himself to be killed, but supernaturally “hid himself, slipping away from the temple grounds.” Jesus disappeared. Just as He appeared at the Feast of Tabernacles—quietly and alone—so He left—quietly and alone.

III. Conclusion

Jesus had put those listening to Him on the spot. They had to make a decision concerning Him. There were only two possible responses to Jesus’ claims. One response was to accept Jesus’ claims as true, and bow before Him in humble, repentant faith, confessing Him as Savior and Lord. The other response, which is seen in today’s Scripture, was hard-hearted, bitter rejection.

The possible choices haven’t changed 2000 years later—Jesus is either the Truth or a liar. Either He is God and Savior, or He is insane. Every person must decide. Either you accept Him or you reject Him.

There is no “halfway” or middle choice. **Turn to 1 John 5:10-12.** As C.S. Lewis wrote, *“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.”*

People often point fingers at Christians and call us elitist. But I haven’t made this up. Baptists haven’t made this up. Christians haven’t made this up. It’s not a manmade issue—it’s what God says in His Word. These are the words of God. Jesus Christ, the great “I AM,” said in **John 14:6**, **“No man comes to the Father except through me.”** **Acts 4:12** says, **“Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.”** People may not like it, but that’s what God says.

Addressing the church at Corinth, **2 Corinthians 13:5** says, **“Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves.”** The same challenge is there for us today. Is Jesus really your Lord and Savior? Or are you are depending on a “works righteousness,” that is, all the good things you do and all your good intentions. The tragic result of this second choice, relying on one’s own works, will be eternal damnation in hell. As Jesus warned in **John 8:24**, **“I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am the one I claim to be, you will indeed die in your sins.”**

Since God says that there is just One way, we need to tell others—as Paul wrote in **1 Timothy 1:15** we need to tell others that **“Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.”** This is why Jesus gave the Great Commission in **Matthew 28:19-20** to all of His disciples: **“Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”** **Turn to Romans 10:13-15.** **1 Pet. 3:15** says, **“But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.”** We must not keep the one way to heaven secret; we need to tell others.