SMITH FOR CHRIST

TEACHING THE WORD · WATCHING THE TIMES



DEEP DIVE

John

Chapter Eight, Verses 1–59

Before Abraham Was Born, I Am — a woman spared, the Light of the world, the truth that frees, and the I AM of the burning bush

NASB 1995 | VERSE BY VERSE | FOUR VOICES | WITH DIAGRAMS

The chapter opens with a bracketed story of mercy and closes with stones in the hands of a crowd. Between them Jesus says who He is — the Light of the world, the Son who sets slaves free, the I AM who was before Abraham. Read through four teachers — **David Guzik**, **R.C. Sproul**, **C.H. Spurgeon** and **Matthew Henry** — with the Greek behind John's key words.

THE PASSAGE

John 8:1–59

mercy · light · I am He · free · whose children · I AM

THE METHOD

Verse by Verse

Color-coded by teacher

WHAT'S INSIDE

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Six movements from the court of the temple to the stones of verse 59

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"and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." — John 8:32

SECTION I · THE PASSAGE

John 8:1–59

Before Abraham Was Born, I Am — Mercy to a woman caught in sin, then claim upon claim in the temple — until the stones come out

† How to Read This Study

This study walks John 8 in 6 movements, in John's own order. Each movement opens with the full NASB 1995 text of those verses, marked with the Berean colors and shapes; then the Greek behind the key words; then the teachers, each in his own color — **David Guzik**, the pastor who walks the text verse by verse; **R.C. Sproul**, the theologian who presses every word for its doctrine; **C.H. Spurgeon**, the preacher who turns the doctrine into a call to the heart; and **Matthew Henry**, the Puritan commentator who gathers it into plain, practical counsel. The figures draw the passage so you can see where John is going. Read the Scripture first; then let each voice add its angle.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word — R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's
C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle — MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

HOW THIS STUDY IS MARKED — God — His character & actions; Command / instruction; Key repeated word; Sin / warning; Promise / blessing; Time / place / contrast

KEY VERSE · JOHN 8:12

"Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, '△ I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but ☆ will have the Light of life.'"

† Before the Passage

John 8 is still the Feast of Booths and its aftermath, still the temple, still the argument of chapter 7 — Who is this man, and where is He from? Chapter 7 ended with the council breaking up and Nicodemus mocked (7:52). Verse 12 of chapter 8 picks up the thread: "Then Jesus again spoke to them." The light ceremony of the feast — great lamps in the Court of the Women — stands behind "I am the Light of the world," as the water ceremony stood behind 7:37. The setting is precise: "in the treasury, as He taught in the temple" (8:20).

Before verse 12 comes a passage the NASB prints in brackets: 7:53–8:11, the woman caught in adultery. We should be honest about why. It is missing from the earliest manuscripts of John — P66 and P75 (around A.D. 200 and the third century) and the great fourth-century codices Sinaiticus and Vaticanus. The first Greek manuscript that has it is Codex Bezae (fifth century or so); Jerome kept it in the Latin Vulgate, and Augustine defended it. Some manuscripts place it elsewhere — after John 7:36, after John 21:25, or after Luke 21:38. Our teachers differ in how much they say: Sproul and Guzik both judge it was not part of John's original Gospel;

Sproul still receives it as authentic and apostolic; Spurgeon and Henry expound it as they find it in their Bibles.

So how will we study it? As the NASB prints it: honestly bracketed, carefully read. Most scholars, including many who doubt it belongs in John, think it records a true event from Jesus' ministry, and nothing in it contradicts the rest of Scripture — Jesus forgives and commands holiness in the same breath, as He does in John 5:14. We will not build any doctrine on these verses alone. Then, from verse 12, we are back on the firmest ground in the Gospel.

The Old Testament roots are deep. The Law of Moses on adultery (Leviticus 20:10) and on witnesses (Deuteronomy 17:6–7; 19:15) shape the first scenes. The pillar of fire that lit Israel's way (Exodus 13:21) stands behind the Light of the world. Abraham is named eleven times. And the chapter rises to the name God gave Moses at the burning bush — "I AM WHO I AM" (Exodus 3:14) — and the "I am He" of Isaiah 43:10. When Jesus says, "before Abraham was born, I am," the crowd understands exactly what He means and picks up stones (8:59).

I
MOVEMENT

JOHN 8:1–11

Go. From Now On Sin No More

A bracketed story, read honestly — a trap, a challenge, and mercy that commands holiness

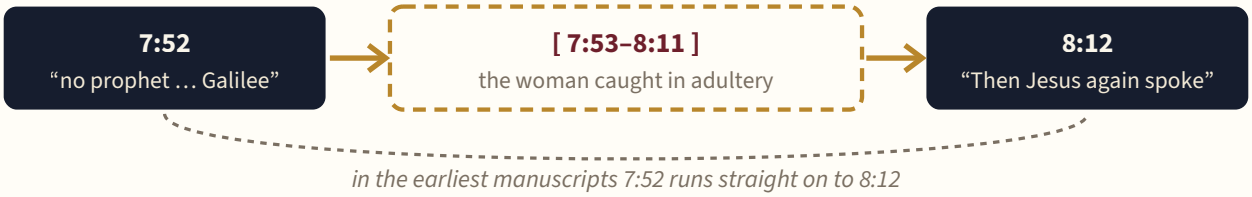
> [1] *But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives.* [2] *Early in the morning He came again into the temple, and all the people were coming to Him; and He sat down and began to teach them.* [3] *The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman caught in adultery, and having set her in the center of the court,* [4] *they said to Him, "Teacher, this woman has been caught in adultery, in the very act.* [5] *"Now in the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women; what then do You say?"* [6] *They were saying this, testing Him, so that they might have grounds for accusing Him. But Jesus stooped down and with His finger wrote on the ground.* [7] *But when they persisted in asking Him, He straightened up, and said to them, "He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her."* [8] *Again He stooped down and wrote on the ground.* [9] *When they heard it, they began to go out one by one, beginning with the older ones, and He was left alone, and the woman, where she was, in the center of the court.* [10] *Straightening up, Jesus said to her, "Woman, where are they? Did no one condemn you?"* [11] *She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said, "I do not condemn you, either. Go. From now on sin no more."]*
>
> JOHN 8:1–11

> *"If there is a man who commits adultery with another man's wife, one who commits adultery with his friend's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death."*
>
> LEVITICUS 20:10

> *"The hand of the witnesses shall be first against him to put him to death, and afterward the hand of all the people. So you shall purge the evil from your midst."*
>
> DEUTERONOMY 17:7

FIGURE · THE BRACKETED PASSAGE

WHY THE NASB BRACKETS JOHN 7:53–8:11



in the earliest manuscripts 7:52 runs straight on to 8:12

NOT IN THESE EARLY WITNESSES	WHERE IT DOES APPEAR
P66 (c. A.D. 200) · P75 (3rd c.)	Codex Bezae — first Greek copy (5th c.)
Codex Sinaiticus (4th c.)	Jerome’s Latin Vulgate (A.D. 383)
Codex Vaticanus (4th c.)	defended by Augustine
and other early Greek copies	most later Greek manuscripts

SOME MANUSCRIPTS PUT IT ELSEWHERE

after John 7:36 · after John 21:25 · after Luke 21:38

Sproul: not original to John, yet authentic — “Whether it belongs here … I leave for the ages.”

The earliest copies of John go from 7:52 straight to 8:12; the story of the woman is found in later manuscripts, not always in the same place.

ἀναμάρτητος

ANAMARTĒTOS · “WITHOUT SIN” · G361

A- (not) + *hamartanō* (to sin): “sinless.” It occurs only here in the New Testament (v. 7). Jesus does not set aside the Law; He applies it. Deuteronomy 17:7 says “the hand of the witnesses shall be first” — so the first stone belongs to a witness, and a righteous one. The Law also required both guilty parties (Leviticus 20:10); the man caught “in the very act” is nowhere to be seen. Sproul wonders whether the sin Jesus had in mind was the very sin they were ready to convict her of.

κατακρίνω

KATAKRINŌ · “CONDEMN” · G2632

To pass the sentence against — the verdict word of Romans 8:34. “Woman, where are they? Did no one condemn you (*katekrinen*)?” “No one, Lord.” “I do not condemn (*katakrinō*) you, either. Go. From now on sin no more.” The order matters: no condemnation first, then the command — never the command as the price of the pardon. A textual note: the passage’s own Greek varies from manuscript to manuscript more than the rest of John does, one of the reasons scholars judge it came into the text later; critical editions print it in double brackets.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik is candid about the text: “it seems unlikely that this portion was part of the original text of John’s gospel,” and “Most of the earliest ancient Greek manuscripts omit this section.” He still teaches it. The scribes and Pharisees used a sinful woman as bait for a trap. On the writing in the dust he says, “What Jesus wrote has been an endless source of speculation,” and he does not pretend to settle it. The heart of the scene is the Judge who could have thrown the first stone: “Knowing all things, He had the right to cast the first stone – but He did not.” Yet He sent her away without ever approving of her sin.

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew’s

Sproul (“The Woman Caught in Adultery,” 8 December 2002) begins with the text: “Frankly, the best gospel of John manuscripts from antiquity do not include this story.” He reports that textual scholars broadly agree it was not in John’s original Gospel — and broadly agree it is authentic and apostolic and belongs in the New Testament: “Whether it belongs here in John’s gospel, at the end of Luke 21, or somewhere else, I leave for the ages.” The trap pitted Rome against Moses: “If He says, ‘Don’t stone her,’ He is in trouble with the Jewish authorities.” On the writing he cites Calvin: “When God closes His holy mouth, let us desist from inquiry.” And the end: “Go now in your forgiveness and sin no more.”

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

Spurgeon expounds the story as one reading with the end of chapter 7, and complains only of the chapter break: “it is a pity to have brought the dividing saw right through the middle of such charming consecutive sentences.” He does not discuss the manuscripts. Jesus’ challenge “must have flashed like a drawn sword, keen as a razor, through the very midst of them.” He did not excuse her: “He condemned the sin, his own pure and holy life was the best condemnation of that.” But He had come, as He said, “to seek and to save that which was lost.”

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry comments on the passage as it stood in his Bible, and notes in passing where his copies differ — the KJV’s added words in verse 6, “as though he heard them not,” are found in some Greek copies “though most copies have it not.” “Those that promise themselves secrecy in sin deceive themselves.” Of the writing: “It is impossible to tell, and therefore needless to ask, what he wrote.” His stooping teaches us to “think twice before we speak once.” The accusers “were convicted by their own consciences.” Christ would not act as a civil judge — he was “no judge nor divider” — but He dismissed her with a warning to sin no more.

II
MOVEMENT

JOHN 8:12–20

I Am the Light of the World

A claim made beside the feast’s great lamps, and two witnesses who agree

12 *Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, “△ I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not 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 true.”* 14 *Jesus answered and said to them, “Even if I testify about Myself, My testimony is true, for I know where I came from and where I am going; but you do not know where I come from or where I am going.* 15 *“You judge according to the flesh; I am not judging anyone.* 16 *“But even if I do judge, My judgment is*

true; for I am not alone in it, but I and the Father who sent Me. [17] *"Even in your law it has been written that the testimony of two men is true.* [18] *"I am He who testifies about Myself, and the Father who sent Me testifies about Me."* [19] *So they were saying to Him, "Where is Your Father?" Jesus answered, "You know neither Me nor My Father; if you knew Me, you would know My Father also."* [20] *These words He spoke in the treasury, as He taught in the temple; and no one seized Him, because His hour had not yet come.*

JOHN 8:12–20

"The LORD was going before them in a pillar of cloud by day to lead them on the way, and in a pillar of fire by night to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night."

EXODUS 13:21

"A single witness shall not rise up against a man on account of any iniquity or any sin which he has committed; on the evidence of two or three witnesses a matter shall be confirmed."

DEUTERONOMY 19:15

τὸ φῶς τοῦ κόσμου

TO PHŌS TOU KOSMOU · "THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD" · G5457

Phōs (G5457) is light in the widest sense, and in Scripture God's self-revelation, holiness and saving truth. John has used it from the prologue: "the Light shines in the darkness" (1:5). Here Jesus says *egō eimi to phōs* — not "I show the light" but "I am" it. The promise has two parts: the follower "will not walk (*ou mē peripatēsē*, a strong double negative) in the darkness," and "will have the Light of life." The claim reaches "the world," not only Israel (Isaiah 49:6).

γαζοφυλάκιον

GAZOPHYLAKION · "TREASURY" · G1049

From a Persian loanword *gaza*, treasure, + *phylakē*, guard. In the temple it named the place of the offering chests, in the Court of the Women — where the widow gave her two coins (Mark 12:41–43; Luke 21:1). John places the light saying there (v. 20): the very court where the great lamps of the feast stood. A public place, "and no one seized Him, because His hour had not yet come."

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik ties the claim to the feast: lamps were lit "in the court of the women," a custom he cites from Alford, and Jesus took the image for Himself. The Pharisees objected that self-testimony was not valid; Guzik answers from their own Law of two witnesses: "those two witnesses exist; they are Jesus and His Father." He notes that the debate happened in the treasury, "the most public place in Jerusalem," and still no one could arrest Him.

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

Sproul's "Jesus' Self-Witness" (15 December 2002) argues that Jesus is not only a witness to the truth but truth incarnate. The Pharisees appealed to the rule that a charge must rest on "two witnesses who had to agree in their testimony." Jesus answers that the Father backs His testimony, and their question, "Where is Your Father?", exposes the real problem: they cannot know Jesus because they do not know the Father. Sproul hears in "His hour" both the darkest moment of the cross and its greatest.

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

Spurgeon's "The Light of the World" (No. 3534) sets Christ against every substitute: "Jesus Christ was the true light in opposition to the smoking flax of tradition," and "Jesus Christ only must be your light." The promise is for followers: "If a man could travel so fast as always to follow the sun, of course he would always be in the light." So, he says, the one who follows Christ will never walk in darkness. "He is the guiding light through death's dark vale." In his exposition he adds on verse 20, "Like our Lord, every child of God is immortal till his work is done."

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry states the claim plainly — "Jesus Christ is the light of the world" — and then the tragedy of those who heard it: "None so incurably blind as those that resolve they will not see." The Pharisees treated Christ's witness as worthless while He was veiled in humility — "as if the sun under a cloud were no sun." And on verse 20: "God can set bounds to the wrath of men, as he does to the waves of the sea."

III
MOVEMENT

JOHN 8:21–30

Unless You Believe That I Am He

Two destinies — dying in sin or knowing Him when He is lifted up

21 *Then He said again to them, "I go away, and you will seek Me, and will die in your sin; where I am going,*
you cannot come." 22 *So the Jews were saying, "Surely He will not kill Himself, will He, since He says, 'Where I am*
going, you cannot come'?" 23 *And He was saying to them, "You are from below, I am from above; you are of this*
world, I am not of this world. 24 *"Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe*
that I am He, you will die in your sins." 25 *So they were saying to Him, "Who are You?" Jesus said to them,*
"What have I been saying to you from the beginning? 26 *"I have many things to speak and to judge concerning*
you, but He who sent Me is true; and the things which I heard from Him, these I speak to the world." 27 *They did*
not realize that He had been speaking to them about the Father. 28 *So Jesus said, "When you lift up the Son*
of Man, then you will know that I am He, and I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the
Father taught Me. 29 *"And He who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone, for I always do the things*
that are pleasing to Him." 30 *As He spoke these things, many came to believe in Him.*

JOHN 8:21–30

FIGURE · I AM HE — I AM

"I AM" IN JOHN 8 — FROM A PICTURE TO THE NAME

8:12 — **"I am the Light of the world"**
a claim with a picture — the feast's lamps

8:24 — **"unless you believe that I am He"**
"He" is supplied in italics; the Greek is egō eimi

8:28 — **"then you will know that I am He"**
when they lift up the Son of Man — the cross

8:58 — **"before Abraham was born, I am"**
no predicate at all — eternal being, not "I was"

THE ROOTS

EXODUS 3:14
"I AM WHO I AM"
LXX: egō eimi ho ōn

ISAIAH 43:10
"that I am He"
LXX: hoti egō eimi

"Before Me there was no God formed"

8:59 · "Therefore they picked up stones to throw at Him"
They understood the claim: stoning was the Law's penalty for blasphemy (Leviticus 24:16).

Read down the steps: each "I am" goes further, until verse 58 uses the bare name of God — and the crowd answers with stones.

ἐγώ εἰμι

EGŌ EIMI · "I AM (HE)" · G1510

Eimi (G1510) is the plain verb "to be." Usually it needs a predicate — "I am the Light." But in verses 24 and 28 Jesus says only *hoti egō eimi*, "that I am," and the NASB rightly prints the supplied "He" in italics. The phrase echoes the Septuagint of Isaiah 43:10, "that you may know and believe Me And understand that I am He" (*hoti egō eimi*), and of Exodus 3:14. To refuse it is to "die in your sins" — note the shift from "sin" (v. 21, the root sin of unbelief) to "sins" (v. 24, all that follows from it).

Ὑψώσητε

HYPSŌSĒTE · "YOU LIFT UP" · G5312

Hypsoō is "to raise high, exalt." John uses it five times, all of the cross: as Moses lifted up the serpent, "even so must the Son of Man be lifted up" (3:14, twice); "When you lift up the Son of Man" (8:28); "if I am lifted up from the earth" (12:32, 34). The word carries a double meaning — raised on a cross, and exalted in glory. And notice who does the lifting: "you." His enemies will crucify Him, and in doing it will reveal who He is.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik reads "you will die in your sins" as the most serious warning: if they reject Jesus, "Death would make their sinful darkness permanent." On the words "I am He" he notes that "The 'He' is rightly in italics and added by the translators," and that the bare "I am" is "a claim to deity." Being "lifted up," he says, "had nothing to do with 'exalting' Jesus in ways we normally think" — it means the cross.

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

Sproul presses the warning without softening it: "The only other way you can die is to die in your sins." Jesus makes a claim of divinity "using those words *ego eimi*, which call back to a title of God in the Old Testament, a title of deity." "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He" points to the cross — Jesus' darkest hour and the moment of redemption.

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

In his exposition Spurgeon stops at verse 24: "Oh, what a terrible sentence is that! … I should like this short, stern sentence to ring in the ears of every unbeliever." But the same passage holds hope: "We, who believe in the uplifted Saviour, can see the Father in the Son." And of verse 29 he writes, "Blessed shall that servant of the Lord be, who can sincerely say, 'I do always those things that please him.'"

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry is equally sober: "Those that live in unbelief are for ever undone if they die in unbelief." "Unbelief is the damning sin; it is a sin against the remedy." Yet the lifting up that they meant for shame would display Him: "When the Son of man was crucified, the Son of man was glorified." And to the question "Who are You?" Jesus gives no new answer — "what he had said from the beginning, he saith still."

IV
MOVEMENT

JOHN 8:31–36

The Son Makes You Free

Continuing in His word, knowing the truth, and the only freedom that is real

31 *So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine;* 32 *and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."* 33 *They answered Him, "We are Abraham's descendants and have never yet been enslaved to anyone; how is it that You say, 'You will become free'?"* 34 *Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin.* 35 *"The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son does remain forever.* 36 *"So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.*

JOHN 8:31–36

ἐὰν ὑμεῖς μείνητε

EAN HYMEIS MEINĒTE · "IF YOU CONTINUE" · G3306

Menō (G3306) is "remain, abide, stay" — one of John's great words (15:4–10). Verse 31 is spoken "to those Jews who had believed Him," and within twenty-eight verses they are picking up stones. Real discipleship is not a moment of interest but staying put in His word: "then you are truly (*alēthōs*) disciples of Mine." The same verb returns in verse 35: "The slave does not remain (*menei*) in the house forever; the son does remain forever."

ἐλευθερόω … ὄντως

ELEUTHEROŌ … ONTŌS · "MAKE FREE … INDEED" · G1659, G3689

Eleutheroō (G1659), "to set free," occurs seven times in the New Testament: John 8:32, 36; Romans 6:18, 22; 8:2, 21; Galatians 5:1. Its opposite here is *doulos*, slave: "everyone who commits (*poiōn*, present — keeps on doing) sin is the slave of sin." Verse 36 adds *ontōs* (G3689), "really, actually" — from the verb "to be": free in fact, not in name. The truth sets free (v. 32) because the Truth is a Person, the Son (v. 36; 14:6).

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik makes abiding the mark of a disciple: "If we will be Jesus' disciples, we must abide in His word." The freedom Jesus promises does not come from "an academic pursuit of truth in general" but from knowing Him. Their proud answer — never enslaved to anyone — ignored both history and their own hearts, and Guzik names the worst bondage: "Slavery to sin is the worst kind of slavery, because there is no escape from our self." Only the Son can set a man free from himself.

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

Sproul's "Abraham and Freedom" (22 December 2002) begins with those who "believed": true discipleship is shown by remaining in Jesus' word, not by a profession or by ancestry — "We must possess what we profess." He insists that apart from Christ every person is enslaved by nature, not merely by circumstance: "By nature you're slaves, you're slaves to your own wicked desires." Only the Son who remains in the house forever can make a slave a son.

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

Spurgeon preached verse 36 as "The Great Liberator" (No. 565, 17 April 1864). The worst tyrant is within: "he who serves his own passions is the slave of the worst of despots." "Jesus the Son alone can make men truly free" — free from guilt, punishment, sin's power and the fear of death — and "we are not only free from, but we are free to." Freedom is received by faith in a moment: "The moment thou believest, thou art free." In his exposition he warns, "There is such a thing as a temporary faith; beware of it," and "acts of sin breed habits of sin; and habits are the chains which slaves wear."

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry: "Those only that continue in Christ's word shall be accepted as his disciples indeed," and "Christ's scholars are sure to be well taught." "A state of sin is a state of bondage." The servant has no lasting place in the house — "Services (we say) are no inheritances" — but the Son does. "Jesus Christ in the gospel offers us our freedom; he has authority and power to make free," and "Those whom Christ makes free are free indeed."

V
MOVEMENT

JOHN 8:37–47

Whose Children Are You?

Abraham's seed who do not do Abraham's deeds — and the father whose desires they do

37 *"I know that you are Abraham's descendants; yet you seek to kill Me, because My word has no place in you.*
38 *"I speak the things which I have seen with My Father; therefore you also do the things which you heard from your father."* 39 *They answered and said to Him, "Abraham is our father." Jesus said to them, "If you are Abraham's children, do the deeds of Abraham.* 40 *"But as it is, you are seeking to kill Me, a man who has*

> *told you the truth, which I heard from God; this Abraham did not do.* 41 *"You are doing the deeds of your father." They said to Him, "We were not born of fornication; we have one Father: God."* 42 *Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and have come from God, for I have not even come on My own initiative, but He sent Me.* 43 *"Why do you not understand what I am saying? It is because you cannot hear My word.* 44 *"You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies.* 45 *"But because I speak the truth, you do not believe Me.* 46 *"Which one of you convicts Me of sin? If I speak truth, why do you not believe Me?* 47 *"He who is of God hears the words of God; for this reason you do not hear them, because you are not of God."*
>
> JOHN 8:37–47

FIGURE · WHOSE CHILDREN ARE YOU?

JOHN 8:37–47	WHAT A TRUE CHILD DOES	WHAT THEY WERE DOING
ABRAHAM	"do the deeds of Abraham" (v39)	"seeking to kill Me … this Abraham did not do" (v40)
GOD	"If God were your Father, you would love Me" (v42)	"you cannot hear My word" (v43)
THE DEVIL	Jesus speaks what He has seen with His Father (v38)	"a murderer from the beginning … a liar and the father of lies" (v44)
HEARING	"He who is of God hears the words of God" (v47)	"you do not hear them, because you are not of God" (v47)

Sproul: "You are the children of the one you obey."

Jesus tests every claim to a father by what the son does — Abraham's deeds, God's love, the devil's murder and lies, and whether a man hears.

ἀνθρωποκτόνος

ANTHRŌPOKTONOS · "MURDERER" · G443

"Man-killer" — *anthrōpos*, man, + *kteinō*, to kill. It occurs only here and twice in 1 John 3:15 ("Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer"). The devil was a murderer "from the beginning" — in Eden, where his lie brought death (Genesis 3:4; Romans 5:12), and in Cain (1 John 3:12). He is also *pseustēs*, a liar, and "the father of lies"; when he lies he speaks *ek tōn idiōn*, "from his own" — lying is native to him. The two marks of his children in this passage are the same two: they seek to kill Jesus (vv. 37, 40), and they will not hear the truth (vv. 43, 45).

πορνεία
PORNEIA · "FORNICATION" · G4202

"We were not born of fornication" (v. 41). The "we" is emphatic in Greek (*hēmeis*), and many readers hear a sneer at Jesus' own birth — as if to say, *we* know who our father is. Whether or not that is intended, they move from Abraham (v. 39) to God Himself (v. 41), and Jesus answers that sonship is proved by likeness: "If God were your Father, you would love Me" (v. 42).

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik sees Jesus granting their physical descent while denying their spiritual claim: they were Abraham's seed but not Abraham's children, and Jesus "exposed the inconsistency in their life." Abraham believed God and welcomed His messengers; they sought to kill the one who told them the truth. On verse 44 he cites Alford, who called it "one of the most decisive testimonies for the objective personality of the devil." The devil is real, he is a murderer and a liar, and men can do his desires while claiming God as their Father.

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

Sproul says sonship in Scripture is defined by obedience: "You are the children of the one you obey." Unbelievers are not reluctant captives of the devil but willing servants — "We are volunteers in the kingdom of darkness." The reason they could not understand Jesus' speech was not a lack of information but a lack of hearing, and Sproul ends by urging his hearers to ask God for ears to hear His Word.

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

Spurgeon's exposition draws the line simply: "If you are a child of God, you will act and speak like your Father does." Family likeness tells the truth about a man's parentage. And the contrast of verses 42–44 is the whole contrast of the chapter: "Christ, coming from the Father, reveals God: ungodly men, coming from the devil, reveal the devil."

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry hears Jesus granting the plain fact — "I know very well that you are Abraham's seed, but now you seek to kill me" — and judging them by their own claims: "Out of their own mouths will he judge vain-glorious hypocrites, who boast of their parentage and education." Why could they not hear? "If the unclean spirit find the heart empty of Christ's word, he enters in, and dwells there." Of the devil he says simply, "There is no truth in him."

VI
MOVEMENT

JOHN 8:48–59

Before Abraham Was Born, I Am

Insults, a promise of life, Abraham's joy — and the name of God

48 *The Jews answered and said to Him, "Do we not say rightly that You are a Samaritan and have a demon?"*
49 *Jesus answered, "I do not have a demon; but I honor My* ↻ *Father, and you dishonor Me.* 50 *"But I do not seek My glory; there is One who seeks and judges.* 51 *"Truly, truly, I say to you,* ☆ *if anyone keeps My word he will never see death."* 52 *The Jews said to Him, "Now we know that You have a demon.* ↻ *Abraham died, and the prophets also; and You say, 'If anyone keeps My word, he will never taste of death.'* 53 *"Surely You are not greater*

than our father Abraham, who died? The prophets died too; whom do You make Yourself out to be?” 54 *Jesus answered, “If I glorify Myself, My glory is nothing; it is My Father who glorifies Me, of whom you say, ‘He is our God’;* 55 *and you have not come to know Him, but I know Him; and if I say that I do not know Him, I will be a liar like you, but I do know Him and keep His word.* 56 *“Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad.”* 57 *So the Jews said to Him, “You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?”* 58 *Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am.”* 59 *Therefore they picked up stones to throw at Him, but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple.*

JOHN 8:48–59

“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.”’”

EXODUS 3:14

πρὶν Ἀβραὰμ γενέσθαι ἐγὼ εἰμί

PRIN ABRAAM GENESTHAI EGŌ EIMI · “BEFORE ABRAHAM WAS BORN, I AM” · G1096, G1510

Two verbs set side by side. Abraham *genesthai* — from *ginomai* (G1096), “to come into being,” aorist: he had a beginning. Jesus *eimi* (G1510), present tense: “I am.” Not “I was” — which would claim only great age — but timeless being. Grammar alone would expect “I was before Abraham”; the switch of tense is the point. The crowd understood: they picked up stones, the Law’s penalty for blasphemy (Leviticus 24:16).

ἠγαλλιάσατο

ĒGALLIASATO · “REJOICED” · G21

Agalliaō (G21) is exultant joy, with the sense of leaping for gladness (Luke 1:47; 1 Peter 1:8). “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad.” When? Scripture does not say exactly; many point to the promise that in his seed all nations would be blessed (Genesis 22:18) and to Moriah, where “God will provide for Himself the lamb” (22:8). Hebrews 11:13 says the patriarchs saw the promises and welcomed them from a distance.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik quotes Spurgeon against the charge of a demon: “No man can be said to have a devil who honors God.” He explains that “I AM” recalls “the voice of the covenant God of Israel revealed at the burning bush,” and that the crowd knew what Jesus claimed: they “felt He was worthy of death and intended to carry it out at that moment.” On His leaving the temple he follows Alford: “There does not appear to be any miraculous escape intended here.”

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew’s

In “Before Abraham Was, I AM” (from his series *Knowing Christ*) Sproul counts this saying as an eighth “I AM,” left off most lists because it ends rather than begins with the words — and he says he personally thinks it is the most dramatic of them all. He calls it one of the plainest declarations of deity in Jesus’ ministry, understood as such by the hearers who took up stones, and he rejects the claim that Jesus never said He was God: whoever says so has not read or not understood His words. (Only part of the transcript is publicly available.)

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

Spurgeon's exposition gives no middle ground: "Rank him either amongst the grossest of impostors, or else as the Son of God, — one or the other." The promise of verse 51 changes death for the believer: "The sting of it shall be taken away; he may fall asleep; he will do so, but he shall not see death." In verse 58 "he claimed the Godhead, he declared that he was certainly God, self-existent from all eternity." And the crowd's answer is the old pattern: "first, hard words, and then stones."

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry on verse 51: "The property of death is so altered to them that they do not see it as death." "Abraham desired to see Christ's day, though it was at a great distance." Of "I am": "it denotes his self-existence; he does not say, I was, but I am," for He "was not only before Abraham, but before all worlds." The stoning was mob violence — "Farewell justice and order if every man pretend to execute a law at his pleasure." And His withdrawal was not fear: "his hour was not yet come." "Christ will not long stay with those who bid him be gone."

VII
THEME

CROSS-REFERENCES

The Passage in the Whole Bible

From the burning bush to the Son who destroys the devil's works

"The people who walk in darkness Will see a great light; Those who live in a dark land, The light will shine on them."

ISAIAH 9:2

"The LORD is my light and my salvation; Whom shall I fear? The LORD is the defense of my life; Whom shall I dread?"

PSALM 27:1

"You are My witnesses," declares the LORD, "And My servant whom I have chosen, So that you may know and believe Me And understand that I am He. Before Me there was no God formed, And there will be none after Me."

ISAIAH 43:10

"As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up;"

JOHN 3:14

"and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness."

ROMANS 6:18

> *"the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil."*
>
> 1 JOHN 3:8

> *"All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth."*
>
> HEBREWS 11:13

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik hears the burning bush behind verse 58 — "the voice of the covenant God of Israel" — the same God who told Moses His name is I AM.

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

Sproul reads "I am He" (vv. 24, 28) against the Old Testament, where *ego eimi* is "a title of God," and "lifted up" against the cross, as in John 3:14.

SECTION II · STUDY HELPS

At a Glance

Four voices, one chapter

Four teachers, one chapter. On the bracketed story they differ in method, not in reverence: Guzik and Sproul state that it was likely not in John's original Gospel, Sproul still receives it as authentic Scripture, and Spurgeon and Henry expound it as it stood in their Bibles. From verse 12 on all four agree: Jesus claims the name of God, and the chapter forces a verdict.

THE MOVEMENT	GUZIK · the text	SPROUL · the doctrine	SPURGEON · the heart	HENRY · the counsel
I · The woman	Unlikely original; He had the right to the first stone and did not throw it.	Not in the best manuscripts, yet authentic — "I leave for the ages"; go in forgiveness.	A sentence like a drawn sword; He condemned the sin by His own holy life.	Secrecy in sin is a delusion; needless to ask what He wrote.
II · The Light	Lamps in the Court of the Women; the two witnesses are Jesus and His Father.	Not a witness to truth but truth incarnate; no Father, no Son.	Follow the sun and walk in light; immortal till his work is done.	None so blind as those who will not see; the sun under a cloud.
III · I am He	Death makes darkness permanent; the bare "I am" is a claim to deity.	The only other way to die is in your sins; egō eimi is a title of God.	A short, stern sentence for every unbeliever; the Father seen in the uplifted Son.	Unbelief is a sin against the remedy; crucified and glorified.
IV · Free indeed	Abide in His word; slavery to self is the worst slavery.	Possess what you profess; slaves by nature.	Free from and free to; beware a temporary faith; habits are chains.	A state of sin is bondage; services are no inheritances.
V · Whose children	Abraham's seed, not Abraham's children; the devil is a real person.	You are the children of the one you obey; volunteers in darkness.	Children act like their Father; ungodly men reveal the devil.	Judged out of their own mouths; an empty heart is a lodging for the devil.
VI · I AM	The covenant voice of the burning bush; no miraculous escape.	The eighth I AM — the most dramatic of all.	Impostor or God; first hard words, then stones.	Not "I was" but "I am"; before all worlds.

JOHN 8:1–59 · A COMPARATIVE READING

† Key Insights to Carry

- **Honesty about the text honors the text.** The NASB brackets 7:53–8:11 because the earliest manuscripts of John do not have it. Sproul: "Frankly, the best gospel of John manuscripts from antiquity do not include this story" — and still he preached it as authentic. We can tell our men the truth and still learn from the story. SPROUL
- **No condemnation, then "sin no more."** "I do not condemn you, either. Go. From now on sin no more" (8:11). The order is the gospel's order: pardon first, then holiness — never holiness as the price of pardon. THE TEXT
- **Only the sinless could throw the first stone.** *Anamartētos*, only here in the New Testament. Guzik: "Knowing all things, He had the right to cast the first stone – but He did not." THE GREEK
- **The Light was spoken beside the lamps.** In the treasury, in the Court of the Women where the feast's lamps stood (8:20), Jesus said, "I am the Light of the world." Spurgeon: "Jesus Christ only must be your light." SPURGEON
- **"I am He" — the "He" is not in the Greek.** Verses 24 and 28 have the bare *egō eimi* of Isaiah 43:10. Sproul: words that "call back to a title of God in the Old Testament, a title of deity." THE GREEK
- **The cross is where He is known.** "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He" (8:28). Henry: "When the Son of man was crucified, the Son of man was glorified." HENRY

- **Believing is not the same as continuing.** Jesus spoke verse 31 to Jews "who had believed Him"; by verse 59 they held stones. Spurgeon: "There is such a thing as a temporary faith; beware of it." SPURGEON
- **The worst slavery is to self.** Guzik: "Slavery to sin is the worst kind of slavery, because there is no escape from our self." Only the Son can make a man free *ontōs* — really (8:36). GUZIK
- **You are the child of the one you obey.** Sproul: "You are the children of the one you obey." Jesus tests every claim to a father by the son's deeds (8:39–47). SPROUL
- **Not "I was" but "I am."** Abraham *came to be* (aorist of *ginomai*); Jesus *is* (present of *eimi*). Henry: "he does not say, I was, but I am." The stones prove they understood. THE GREEK

† Questions for the Table

1 **Which voice condemns me most loudly — my own, someone else's, the accuser's? What does Jesus say to that voice in 8:10–11?**

Pardon first, then "sin no more" — never the other way around.

8:10-11; Rom 8:1

2 **When I'm quick to pick up a stone against another man, what sin of my own am I ignoring?**

"He who is without sin among you …"

8:7-9; Matt 7:3-5

3 **Where am I still walking in darkness — a habit, a secret, a resentment — that I need to bring into His light?**

The follower "will not walk in the darkness."

8:12; 1 John 1:7

4 **Am I continuing in His word, or did I believe once and drift? What does staying put look like for me this week?**

A temporary faith is not a saving faith (Spurgeon).

8:31-32

5 **What chain still holds me, and have I ever asked the Son — not my willpower — to make me free indeed?**

Habits are the chains which slaves wear; the Son breaks them.

8:34-36; Rom 6:18

6 **If someone judged my father by my deeds this week, whom would they say I belong to?**

You are the children of the one you obey (Sproul).

8:39-44; 1 John 3:8

John 8 begins with a woman who expected a stone and received mercy, and ends with a Savior who received the stones Himself. Between them He says who He is: the Light of the world, the Son who sets slaves free, the I AM who was before Abraham. Every man in the chapter must decide whether to follow the Light or pick up a rock.

Teaching the Word. Watching the Times. — Smith For Christ

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Each teacher's section summarizes the pages below in our own words; short quotations are verbatim from them. Matthew Henry (1662–1714) completed his *Commentary* himself through the Gospels and Acts. Henry's Commentary and C.H. Spurgeon (1834–1892) are in the public domain; Guzik and Sproul are summarized — consult each author's own work.

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