

# The Light of the World

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, we are beginning this morning a new little series in John's Gospel, and Edward is going to be preaching to us this morning from John chapter 8. And so I would invite you now to turn in your Bibles, and we're going to read together from John chapter 8 at verse 12, and right through to the end of this chapter.

So it's a long reading, but an important one, as we see Jesus locked in controversy with many who say that they belong to God, say that they worship God, but in fact, Jesus points out that quite the reverse is true.

So in John 8 then, at verse 12, we read these words. Again, Jesus spoke to them, saying, I am the light of the world.

Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life. So the Pharisees said to him, you're bearing witness about yourself. Your testimony is not true.

Jesus answered, even if I do bear witness about myself, my testimony is true. For I know where I came from and where I'm going. But you do not know where I come from or where I am going.

[ 1 : 22 ] You judge according to the flesh. I judge no one. Yet even if I do judge, my judgment is true. For it is not I alone who judge, but I and the Father who sent me.

In your law it is written that the testimony of two men is true. I am the one who bears witness about myself and the Father who sent me bears witness about me.

They said to him, therefore, where is your Father? Jesus answered, you know neither me nor my Father. If you knew me, you would know my Father also.

These words he spoke in the treasury as he taught in the temple. But no one arrested him because his hour had not yet come. So he said to them again, I'm going away and you will seek me and you will die in your sin.

Where I am going, you cannot come. So the Jews said, will he kill himself since he says where I'm going, you cannot come. He said to them, you are from below.

[ 2 : 31 ] I am from above. You are of this world. I am not of this world. I told you that you would die in your sins. For unless you believe that I am he, you will die in your sins.

So they said to him, who are you? Jesus said to them, just what I've been telling you from the beginning. I've much to say about you and much to judge.

But he who sent me is true and I declare to the world what I've heard from him. They didn't understand that he'd been speaking to them about the Father.

So Jesus said to them, when you have lifted up the Son of Man, and then you will know that I am he and that I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me.

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

[ 3 : 34 ] So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, if you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples. And you will know the truth and the truth will set you free.

They answered him, we're offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say you'll become free? Jesus answered them, truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin.

The slave does not remain in the house forever, the son remains forever. So if the son sets you free, you will be free indeed. I know that you're offspring of Abraham.

Yet you seek to kill me, because my word finds no place in you. I speak of what I have seen with my father. And you do what you have heard from your father.

They answered him, Abraham is our father. Jesus said to them, if you were Abraham's children, you'd be doing what Abraham did. But now you seek to kill me, the man who has told you the truth

that I heard from God.

[ 4 : 43 ] This is not what Abraham did. You are doing what your father did. They said to him, we were not born of sexual immorality. We have one father, even God.

Jesus said to them, if God were your father, you would love me. For I came from God, and I am here. I came not of my own accord, but he sent me.

Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word. You are of your father, the devil.

And your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning. And has nothing to do with the truth. Because there is no truth in him.

When he lies, he speaks out of his own character. For he is a liar and a father of lies. But because I tell the truth, you do not believe me.

[ 5 : 43 ] Which of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe in me? Whoever is of God hears the words of God.

The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God. The Jews answered him, are we not right in saying that you are a Samaritan and have a demon?

Jesus answered, I do not have a demon. But I honor my father, and you dishonor me. Yet I do not seek my own glory. There is one who seeks it, and he is the judge.

Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death. The Jews said to him, now we know that you have a demon.

Abraham died, as did the prophets. Yet you say, if anyone keeps my word, he will never taste death. Are you greater than our father Abraham who died? And the prophets died?

[ 6 : 46 ] Who do you make out yourself to be? 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.

But you have not known him. I know him. If I were to say that I do not know him, I would be a liar like you. But I do know him, and I keep his word.

Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it. And was glad. So the Jews said to him, you are not yet 50 years old.

And have you seen Abraham? Jesus said to them, truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.

So they picked up stones to throw at him. But Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple.

[ 7 : 47 ] Amen. Amen. And may God bless to us. This is word. Well, good morning, friends.

Very good to see you all. Let's turn to John's gospel, chapter 8, for our passage for this morning. Well, we're starting a new series of sermons this morning.

Under the title, Jesus Locked in Controversy. And we're due to have five sermons in this series.

And in each of them, I want to study one of the great I am sayings from John's gospel.

Now, you may not think of the I am sayings as being embroiled in controversy. But they are. They bring to a head the battles that Jesus is engaged in throughout John's gospel.

In each of these I am sayings, Jesus is tackling the ignorance and the hostility of his opponents.

And he's seeking to teach them and to teach all of us various aspects of the great truth about himself.

[ 9 : 06 ] So let's begin at John 8, verse 12, where Jesus says, I am the light of the world. But whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.

Now, that is a very wonderful thing to say and to hear. Unless you happen to be one of those people who were actually listening to Jesus at the time.

Because look at the response that he gets to that glorious utterance. Look at what they say in verse 13. The Pharisees said to him, you are bearing witness about yourself. Your testimony is not true.

Now, isn't that astonishing? Barefaced, brass-necked hostility. They have just heard the most magnificent announcement. And they tell Jesus that he's a liar.

Well, welcome to the world of John's gospel. Truth and the rejection of truth are in constant conflict. And while this makes uncomfortable reading for us, it's good for us because it sharpens up our perception of what is true about Jesus.

[ 10 : 15 ] And the more clearly we can perceive the truth about him, the clearer we shall be about what it means to be saved. We might have made the mistake that these I am sayings were given in comfortable and gentle circumstances.

Perhaps in the way that a kindly old university professor, sitting in a deep leather armchair, might be teaching a group of admiring undergraduates who are loving his every word of wisdom.

Well, it's not like that at all. Most of these sayings were given in the atmosphere of a theological cauldron. Jesus at war. Jesus seeking to persuade his opponents of the truth about himself because he was so concerned for them.

And he wanted them to be saved. And he was so grieved over them because he knew that they hated his teaching and ultimately that they wanted to kill him. As he puts it in chapter 8, verse 40, he says, But now you seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. I am the light of the world. That's the truth from God. But it elicits a determination to put Jesus to death. And you'll have noticed that at the very end of the chapter, they're picking up stones to stone him to death.

[ 11 : 39 ] Now, we'll come to the details of the passage in just a moment, but I first want to delve back to the beginning of John's gospel so that we can see the bigger context in which this light of the world saying is set.

If you're quick-fingered, you might like to turn with me back to the very beginning of the gospel, to the opening verses of chapter 1, those famous verses. In the first three verses of chapter 1, John the evangelist, the author of this gospel, asserts the eternity of Jesus.

In the beginning was the word, he says. The word, of course, is Jesus. So he asserts the eternity of Jesus, the deity of Jesus, the word was God, and the creative power of Jesus.

All things were made through him. Now, nothing greater could be said about Jesus. But the next two verses lead us straight into the conflict which led to his crucifixion.

Verse 4, In him was life, eternal life, and the power to bestow it upon his people. And the life was the light of men. So eternal life and glorious light are given to his people by Jesus.

[ 12 : 54 ] But, verse 5, the light shines in the darkness. And what John means by the darkness is the darkness of the human heart, its ingrained hostility to God, its rejection of the loving rule of God, all of which leads to moral darkness, the inability to distinguish truth from error, which leads to a sense of futility and frustration and hopelessness, and ultimately, of course, destruction.

Human life without God is doomed to hopelessness and futility, and it's fueled by a smoldering anger and resentment against God. That's the darkness, and the darkness is the place of sin and wicked deeds.

John goes on like this in chapter 3, verse 19. He says, And this is the judgment, or this is the verdict. The light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light, because their deeds were evil.

For everyone who does wicked things hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. Just imagine a city after nightfall, where wicked deeds are being done, houses are being broken into, valuables are being stolen, murders are being committed.

And suddenly, a great, powerful searchlight comes on and sweeps its way into every corner of the city, and men immediately try to cover up what they're doing.

[ 14 : 29 ] They hide from the great light, because they're ashamed of having their wrongdoing exposed. They love to do what is wrong, and they hate to have their wrongdoings uncovered.

But Jesus, the light of the world, came not only to expose sin, but to bring salvation, to lead men and women out of our natural love for sin into a new world, to say to us, Leave all that behind.

It can only lead to death and dissolution. Follow me, and you will not walk in darkness. You will have the light of life. So the light becomes something to love, and to live by, to walk by, not something to hate, and shrink from, and run away from.

And when any person becomes a Christian, they leave behind that dark world of sin and hopelessness, and begin to rejoice in truth, and hope, and freedom.

Now you know how critics of Christianity will sometimes say, Faith? Faith is a leap into the dark.

Well, it's precisely the opposite. It's a leap out of the dark, into the company of the light of the world.

[ 15 : 43 ] It's a glorious leap, a transformation, by which we are placed, on the sure road to eternal life. And yet Jesus' opponents, say to him, You're lying.

So, he engaged with them in controversy, because he wanted them to come to him. His motive, throughout this dialogue in chapter 8, is love for these hostile Jews.

Whereas their motive, is fierce hatred. So let's turn now to this chapter, and we'll study both the hostility of Jesus' opponents, and his words, as he tells them the truth that he so wanted them to

believe.

So we have here a study in conflict, darkness against light, untruth against truth. And as things were back then, so they are today.

This passage will help us to see what is going on in the modern world, where Jesus continues to evoke loving allegiance from some, but determined opposition from others.

[16:49] So let's take note of this powerful teaching that Jesus lays before his unwilling listeners, and we'll take it under three headings. First, Jesus insists that his teaching is true.

Now we're looking here at verses 13 to 18. The Pharisees say to him in verse 13, your testimony is not true. And he replies in verse 14, my testimony is true.

Now it's striking that the conversation is about testimony. Jesus is not simply teaching, he's testifying. And this language of testimony, or bearing witness, runs right the way through John's gospel.

In fact, it starts right back at the beginning, chapter 1, verse 6, where John the evangelist, that's the author of the book, introduces John the Baptist. We mustn't confuse the two Johns.

And the evangelist writes, there was a man sent from God whose name was John the Baptist. He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light.

[17:56] He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light. So this talk of testimony and witness makes the whole of John's gospel into a kind of courtroom drama.

The evidence of those who are fit to testify to Jesus is being presented to the world. And the world of men and women is being asked to weigh the testimony and to give their verdict.

John the evangelist is really saying to each of us, do you accept the testimony to Jesus? Are you willing to believe that he is the one that he claims to be? Are you willing to say that his testimony is true?

Now he tells the Pharisees why his testimony is true in verse 14. He says, my testimony is true for I know where I came from and where I'm going, but you do not know where I come from or where I'm going.

They're perhaps just thinking in very earthly terms. Maybe they thought that he'd come from Nazareth and was going to Bethany or somewhere else like that. But what he meant was I've come from heaven and I'm going back to heaven via my death and resurrection.

[19:09] I speak the truth because I've come from heaven. But that's not all. Verse 17. In your law, the law of Moses, it is written that the testimony of two men is true.

I am the one who bears witness about myself and the father. That's the second. He who sent me bears witness about me. Under the law of Moses, the testimony of two people was said to carry weight in a court of law.

But Jesus is saying, my testimony carries infinitely more weight. It's the testimony, not of two men, but of the first and second persons of the Holy Trinity.

It's my testimony and the testimony of the father who sent me. He adds his testimony to mine. And do the Pharisees accept what he's saying?

Do they fiddlesticks? His words simply don't make any sense to them. They haven't a clue what he's talking about. They say to him in verse 19, well, where is your father?

[20:15] Perhaps they're thinking of Joseph here, his mother's husband. Perhaps they're thinking, is he still alive? Is he still making furniture in the carpenter's shop in Nazareth? They haven't a clue.

And Jesus answers them in verse 19, you know neither me nor my father. If you knew me, you would know my father also.

What he meant by that was, if you recognized me for who I am, you would know my father also. You'd recognize him. But such knowledge was quite beyond their comprehension.

So the testimony and the teaching of Jesus is true. That's what he's asserting here. Now does the modern world, our world, accept that Jesus speaks the truth?

The truth. The world of 2023 is a very different world from the world of my grandparents. In their day, some 50 or 60 years ago, there was still a strong consensus that there was such a thing as truth.

[21:20] Now that consensus has not entirely disappeared from the modern world, but it's an endangered species. For many people today, the question is not, is something true?

That's almost a non-question. The question is, is self-centered. The question is, is this thing pleasant to me? Is it agreeable to my taste? Will it bring me pleasure?

So I become the arbiter of things. I become the judge. If I like it, I give it the thumbs up. But if I dislike it, I shrug my shoulders and turn my back on it.

Truth, as something of abiding and objective value, is a category that I simply don't recognize if my mind has been shaped by 21st century values.

But Jesus calls upon us to recognize truth. My testimony, he says, is true because its origin is heaven.

[ 22 : 16 ] Heaven is the place of truth, whereas the earth is the realm of deceit and lies, half-truths and hypocrisy. Now we know this when we're listening to the news, don't we?

You hear item after item and you ask yourself, is this piece of news true? Or is the truth being somehow covered over by layers of deception? Did Boris Johnson tell the truth to Parliament? Well, he says he did. Others say he didn't. Is Donald Trump a truthful man? Have Nicola Sturgeon and her husband told the truth?

We live in a murky world where truth is often hidden by shadows. Jesus says, I am the light of the world. To follow him is to leave the shadows and the darkness and to allow his light to show us what the world is really like and to show us what our own hearts are really like.

His teaching is true. That's the first thing. Now secondly, verses 21 to 30, Jesus insists that to reject him is death.

[ 23 : 29 ] In other words, the stakes are really high. They couldn't be higher. These Pharisees need to hear how they can be eternally saved. Otherwise, they will be lost forever.

Jesus puts it like this in verse 21 and it's chilling. He says, you will die in your sin, meaning you will die unforgiven. You cannot come to where I'm going, which is heaven.

Heaven will be barred to you. Now, they misunderstand him in verse 22. When he says, where I am going, you cannot come, they think he's talking about committing suicide.

So he says to them in verse 23, no, it's not that. The problem is we are of different realms, you and I. You are of this world. That's your nature.

You're worldly. But I'm not of this world. That's why you fail to understand me. But, verse 24, it is crucial that you do understand me and I want you to understand me because you will die unforgiven in your sins unless, unless what?

[ 24 : 39 ] Well, look at verse 24. Unless you believe that I am he, you will die in your sins. Now, friends, I want us to linger on that statement in verse 24 for just a moment.

There may well be people here today or listening on the, on the screen who are not yet Christians but are really interested to know what being a Christian actually means.

Now, if you're in that category, we're delighted that you're here. We want you to keep coming. Well, we have it here clearly in verse 24. It's all about coming to believe the truth about who Jesus is.

Unless you believe that I am he, you will die in your sins which means you will not go to be with God in heaven after you die. So, it's all about accepting the truth that Jesus is God incarnate, God in human flesh who has come to rescue us from hell, from eternal death because he loves us.

Look again at that phrase in verse 24. Unless you believe that I am he. Now, in the original language, Jesus is saying unless you believe that I am.

[ 25 : 53 ] It's another I am saying. We have another one in verse 28. You will know that I am. We have another one in verse 58.

Truly I say to you, before Abraham was, I am. And that phrase, I am, is the name of God, God's personal name, the name that he revealed to Moses at the burning bush back in Exodus chapter 3. I am who I am. A name that speaks of his eternal existence, his limitless power, and his burning desire to rescue his people from their slavery in Egypt back then.

That's the historical setting in which God revealed his wonderful name to Moses. I am the God who loves his people and who is about to liberate them from their bondage to the Egyptians.

Christians. And when Jesus deliberately and repeatedly takes this name on his own lips, and he does it many times through John's gospel, he is saying to his hearers, I am the true and only God.

[ 27 : 00 ] I've come to earth in human form to rescue you from your bondage, not to the Egyptians, but your bondage to sin and death. And, he says in verse 28, when you've lifted up the son of man, that is me, the human being, man, on the cross, where I will die, and in dying, bear the punishment that you deserved, experiencing death for your sins so that you will not have to experience it, dying for you in your place.

When that happens, then, verse 28, you will know that I am he. I am the I am in human form. And going back to verse 24, when you come to believe that I am, you will not die unforgiven in your sins. On the contrary, you will be saved and you can be sure of it. Now, that's what it means to become a Christian, to accept, to believe that Jesus is truly God, the one who reveals the very nature of God, the one who has been lifted up on the cross to bear the penalty of our sins in our place so that we should be able to follow him to heaven.

It is very wonderful. This is the great liberation. If you've never accepted this, friend, do it today. Step into the light, the light of the world.

Believe and accept that Jesus is God in human form, in rescue mode. And as verse 12 puts it, you will no longer walk in darkness, but you will have the light of life.

[ 28 : 38 ] There's a further point to notice here, and that is the way that Jesus presses his own identity into the identity of God, the Father. He's saying, you cannot understand me except as the very expression of the nature and will of God.

These Jews say to him in verse 25, who are you? Well, that's the key question and it's provoked by what he has just said in verse 24.

Well, at least they've got the question right, if not the answer. And he replies in verse 25, you ask me, who are you? Well, the answer is just what I've been saying from the beginning.

I have much to say about you and much to judge, but, and here's the critical thing, he who sent me is true and I declare to the world what I have heard from him.

In other words, the Father and I are inextricably linked. I didn't come here as a self-appointed, wild-eyed, crazy, maverick preacher.

[ 29 : 44 ] I've been sent by God the Father, authenticated by him. And my message, my teaching, is not way out, worldly, gobbledygook. It's God's message.

It's what I've heard from him. And this is another reason for believing that I am. I've come from God the Father to accomplish his purpose. It is God who has so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whoever believes in him may not perish but have eternal life.

I've been sent by God to bring salvation, to bring eternal life. Well, let's pause for breath for just a moment. We've seen so far that Jesus is insisting, first, that his teaching is true, and second, that failing to recognize him will lead to dying unforgiven.

So what is the initial response of these Jewish people? Well, it's there in verse 30. As he was saying these things, many believed in him.

But we're about to see that it was a shallow belief, and its shallowness is shown up by what happens next. So many believed in him. Verse 31.

[ 31 : 03 ] So Jesus said to these Jews who had believed in him, if you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.

They answered him, we are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say you will become free? They do not like his clear implication that they are still slaves.

They bridle at that suggestion. They bristle at it like unfriendly dogs. Now here's our third point.

Jesus insists that those who reject him are truly children of the devil.

His answer to their bristling question here in verse 33 is to explain to them in the following verses that they really are enslaved to sin and its deadly effects because their real father is not Abraham at all, though they claim he is, but the devil.

Now certainly their bloodlines take them back to Abraham. These were Jewish people. They were genetically descended from Abraham. But Jesus is saying that their nature, their family characteristics, are not those of Abraham at all.

[ 32 : 22 ] They're those of the devil. It was he who was keeping them in slavery to sin. So we today need to see the long-term implications of this.

And that is that if we today resist Jesus' message, we too are slaves to sin. We too are, in truth, the offspring of the devil.

It's the devil who grips us, who controls the unbelief of our hearts. It's a shocking thing that Jesus is teaching here, but it is the truth. To resist Jesus' message and to turn away from him is to remain a slave of sin and a child of the devil.

Let's follow Jesus' argument from verse 39. He's saying, if you were Abraham's children, if you were his true children, you would be doing the things that Abraham did.

So what did Abraham do? Well, he loved God and trusted God and knew that God would fulfill his promises to him and would send an ultimate descendant of his line to bring salvation to Israel and the world.

[ 33 : 33 ] In other words, Abraham was looking for the great and glorious future day when a savior, springing from his own family, would be revealed. And Jesus says in verse 56, your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day.

Indeed, he saw it and was glad. Abraham couldn't wait for me to be revealed. But, back to verse 40, your attitude towards me is the complete opposite.

You are trying to kill me. Abraham looked forward to welcoming me, but your hearts are set on putting me to death. This is not what Abraham did.

That's why you're no true descendants of Abraham, even though biologically you're descended from him. Your deeds are not what Abraham did. Rather, verse 41, you are doing what your real father, the devil, always did and continues to do, which is to reject me and to seek to kill me.

Now, the battle goes on. They respond in verse 41, we were not born of sexual immorality. Now, that's probably a slur on Jesus' human origins because it would have been known in Israel and gossiped that his mother Mary was not actually married to Joseph when Jesus was conceived.

[ 34 : 57 ] So, they're accusing him of being a bastard, somebody born outside wedlock. And then they say, we have been legitimately fathered by God. your ancestry.

It's very dubious. Ours is not. But Jesus comes straight back at them in verse 42. If God were your father, you would love me for I came from God and I'm here.

I came not of my own accord, but he sent me. And then he goes on in verse 44 to be absolutely explicit about their true paternity. He says, you are of your father, the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires.

He was a murderer from the beginning and has nothing to do with the truth because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character for he is a liar and the father of lies. So, what is he saying to them? He's saying, you are a brood of the devil's children. Murder is in your heart. You want to murder me. And lies fill your hearts and dominate your thinking.

[ 36 : 06 ] The devil hates the truth and has not an ounce of truth in him. And you people are following in his footsteps. Now, what are we to make of this?

Jesus is being so controversial, so shocking, so offensive. But his intention must be to shock them, to jolt them, to force them to think, to question, to ask whether what he's saying might just be true. After all, there were senior Jewish people, some Pharisees, some others, who did become real Christians. Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus came to Pontius Pilate after Jesus had been killed on the cross and they asked permission to bury his body.

They were taking their lives into their hands in doing that. And here is John the evangelist writing his gospel some 50 years after the events. He knew how many senior Jews, including someone like Paul, had become true disciples of Jesus.

It was possible. Paul had to be shocked by Jesus to bring him from darkness and unbelief into the light. Jesus knew that a Jew who was initially hostile could be saved and that's why he's so persistent with them.

[ 37 : 28 ] But what are we to make of this today? Should we take a cue from Jesus? Should we start telling our friends and our relatives who are not Christians that they're children of the devil? Think of your mother, for example, who nursed you and fed you and loved you and cared for you for 20 years.

If she's not a Christian, do you send her an email and tell her that she's currently the devil's offspring? It's probably not the wisest course.

But if she's resisting the gospel and wanting to keep the Lord Jesus firmly out of her life, you need to be clear in your own mind just who she does belong to. You need to pray for her because in the words of verse 24, unless she believes that I am, she will die in her sins.

Look at what the light of the world is saying in verse 44. Now, this is an instance of the light shining into the darkness. He's saying to them, your father is the devil and your will is to do your father's desires.

He was a murderer from the beginning and has nothing to do with the truth because there is no truth in him. But, here's the shocking thing. Jesus is saying this to, look back to verse 31, to the Jews who had believed in him.

[ 38 : 54 ] Belief in inverted commas. You see, Jesus knew what was in human beings. He knew that their initial profession of belief was false, shallow.

He didn't accept it. He didn't say, oh, it's lovely to have you folks on board, step in and fall in behind me. No, he said to them in verse 32, you are enslaved.

You need to be set free. You're gripped by lies and your father is the lying devil. But, verse 36, if the son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

Great promise there. So, he's giving them a shocking diagnosis. It is an offensive diagnosis. It rouses up their hostility to Jesus. It still rouses up a person's hostility to be told that they're a child of the devil.

Well, this is a long chapter and we can't look at every detail, but let me, in a final few moments, try to draw the threads together and lay out the message of the passage as clearly as I can.

[ 39 : 59 ] The issue is truth and lies. The freedom that Jesus promises there in verse 36 is not political freedom.

It's not economic freedom. It's freedom from being gripped and blinded by the devil's lies. In fact, John the Evangelist writes chillingly in his first letter, chapter 5, verse 19, the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.

That's the distressing truth. The evil one, Satan holds the whole world in slavery by his lies. And the greatest lie in the whole world is to say that Jesus is not God incarnate, that he has not been sent to the world by God the Father to bring salvation to the world.

To deny that Jesus is the Son of God and the incarnation of God, that is the fundamental lie. That's the attitude of the one who is enslaved as a child of the devil.

But the moment of release from that slavery comes when a person says, Jesus is the Son of God. He is the Christ. He is my Savior.

[ 41 : 11 ] He is the great I Am. That is the first truth. It's the greatest truth that each one of us needs to grasp, that Jesus is God incarnate.

But it has powerful ongoing consequences. Once the great lie that Jesus is not who he claims to be, once that has been removed from our hearts, a whole new power of wanting to love and to understand the truth begins to fill our hearts.

The light of the world begins to shine into our hearts, exposing the lies that our hearts have been harboring. We begin to want truth. We begin to be thirsty for truth.

There can be pain involved as we acknowledge the darkness of the dark corners inside us, as we begin to come to terms with our dishonesties, with the half-truths that we've nourished.

To grow into a more truthful person can be very uncomfortable, but it's what happens as the Lord deals with us and sets us free and shines his light into the murky depths.

[ 42 : 19 ] But the repudiation of lies, the rejection of lies, is not just a personal thing about our own characters and behavior.

It's also about coming to understand the lies that grip society, that grip politics and nations and governments and big business, the lies that can corrupt our educational establishments, the judicial system, the medical profession, the arts, and alas, the churches.

Now, I don't mean that everything in the world is as bad as it could possibly be. Of course not. The image of God displayed in men and women is bruised and battered, but not completely erased.

There are good judgments made in the courts. There are good musical concerts. There are good sporting events, especially when England wins. There are honest businesses.

There's much good medicine practiced. But lies creep into every area of human life and endeavor, much as fog creeps under a barn door and fills the whole atmosphere inside.

[ 43 : 27 ] One of the most helpful books that I've read recently is Sharon James' book, *The Lies We Are Told, The Truth We Must Hold*. Put up your hand if you've read that in the last few months.

One, two, three, four, five, fifty, sixty, seventy.

A few. It's well worth reading. It really is. It exposes so many things. Not a long book, not difficult to read, but it opens up the historical roots of many of the strands of untruth which have gripped the modern world.

The roots especially of atheism and Marxism and the deceitful assumptions that lie behind things like euthanasia and abortion and transgenderism.

It's only the truth of the Bible and of the Lord Jesus that can expose the profound falseness of these weapons of Satan. But finally, why does Jesus persist in his controversy with these hostile

Pharisees in John chapter 8?

Why does he not just turn away from them and leave them to the devil? It's because he cares about them. As he says elsewhere, I have come for the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

[ 44 : 37 ] The Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost. Now that's our Jesus. He doesn't give up on people. He's persistent. He knows, far better than anybody else, that our eternal destiny is at stake.

If you have never yet said to him, Lord Jesus, I believe that you are the Son of God sent to save me, you need to do it. Any one of us could step into eternity next week.

But for all who do come to him, he promises us freedom. Freedom from the power of the devil. If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

And then we shall rejoice in our lives and be able to step forward with confidence, knowing that our pathway through life is lit up by the light of the world who makes this great promise.

Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life. Well, let's pray together.

[ 45 : 43 ] our dear Lord Jesus, our merciful and only Savior, look down on each one of us we pray.

Take each one of us by the hand and lead us to eternal safety in the kingdom of God and we ask it for your name's sake.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.