

FPFWC Christian Development



Liberating Gospels

April 2022

Spring Quarter

April 23, 2022

Lesson #4 – Freedom in the King

SCRIPTURE TEXT – John 8:31-38

Key Verse - If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.—John 8:36

ICE BREAKER –

1. *How does truth set someone free?*
2. *What prevents Christians from following Jesus' teaching and growing as His disciples?*

LESSON BACKGROUND

The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke are called synoptic. This designation implies that these Gospels tell the story of Jesus from similar perspectives. (For an example of these similarities, compare Matthew 24:4–8; Mark 13:5–8; and Luke 21:8–11.)

However, John's Gospel is different. While telling the same basic story of Jesus, John often includes material not found in the synoptic Gospels (example: Jesus' "Bread of Heaven Discourse" in John 6:25–59). In other instances John omits material found in the synoptic Gospels (example: Jesus' transfiguration in Matthew 17:1–9; Mark 9:2–13; and Luke 9:28–36).

Today's Scripture text is an example of the former. The synoptics Gospels do not mention Jesus' teaching found in John 7–9. That John's Gospel has different emphases than the synoptics does not mean that John cannot be trusted. Just as different observers might have dissimilar yet accurate retellings of the same event, John's depiction provides a different yet complementary perspective on Jesus' person and work.

John's Gospel notes the special relationship he had with Jesus (see John 13:23; 19:26; 21:7, 20). Further John was one of three witnesses to Jesus' transfiguration (see Matthew 17:1–8; Mark 9:2–8; Luke 9:28–36). John was among the closest of Jesus' disciples—he had a front-row seat to Jesus' person and work. Therefore, John's attestation can be trusted (see John 21:24).

Today's Scripture passage is a part of a longer discourse that took place in Jerusalem during the Feast of Tabernacles (see John 7:2, 10, 14). The observance was one of Israel's most important celebrations and dated to the time of Moses (see Leviticus 23:33–36, 39–43; Numbers 29:12–34; Deuteronomy 16:13–17; 31:10).

The feast began on the 15th day of the month of Tishri, which is in late September or early October. Its significance was twofold. First, it celebrated the end of the harvest season. Second, it commemorated God's provision during

Israel's wilderness wanderings. After the Israelites left Egypt, but before they entered the promised land, the people lived in tents. The celebration was to remind Israel of this history. Ultimately the feast thanked God for His daily provision.

The feast provided a backdrop for Jesus to express His divine identity by using items common in first-century observation: water and lamp light. During the feast, a priest took water from the Pool of Siloam, carried it to the temple, and poured it over the altar. On the feast's final day the priest marched around the altar without pouring water. This act demonstrated hopeful expectation that the Messiah would provide water as had been promised centuries before (see Joel 3:18). On the feast's seventh day, against this backdrop, Jesus stated, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink" (John 7:37).

Additionally, on each night of the feast, except on the Sabbath, giant oil lamps were lit in the temple's Court of Women. It was against this backdrop that Jesus proclaimed himself to be "the light of the world" and that whoever followed Him "shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John 8:12). Jesus proclaimed himself to be the fulfillment of Israel's messianic hope, speaking the words of His heavenly Father (see 8:28).

LESSON COMMENTARY

8:31–32. Because of vv. 33–59, some think that the ones who believed (vv. 30–31) did not have true faith. But one must distinguish between the new believers and the crowd at large. John interjected that Jesus' words were spoken only to **those Jews who had believed Him** (v. 31), not the resistant crowd in vv. 33–59. Eternal life is by faith alone, but being true **disciples** requires Christians to **continue** or "abide" in Christ's teachings (see comments on 6:66; 15:1–5). As believers obey (v. 32), they **will know the truth** experientially, and this **truth will make them free**. This freedom concerns sanctification, not justification (cf. 17:17, 19). This liberation is not an intellectual accomplishment but a God-empowered freedom from sin, realized through an ongoing faith relationship with Jesus (v. 36).

8:33. **They** does not find its antecedent in vv. 30–32 but in the "they" of the preceding passage (vv. 19, 25, 27), the wider audience of unbelieving Jews (vv. 13, 22). Many Jews relied on their physical descent from **Abraham**. Despite the nation's domination by Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome, the Jewish people thought of themselves as a free people, both politically and spiritually. But Jesus was speaking spiritually of freedom from sin.

8:34–36. Since **everyone**, apart from Christ, **commits sin** (Rm 3:10–19, 23), everyone is a **slave of sin** (2Pt 2:19; Rm 6:16, 20). Jesus illustrated this idea with an example from real life. Since a **slave** can be sold by his owner to another family, he **does not remain in the household forever** (v. 35). But a **son does**. Since Jesus is **the Son** of God, He can make one **free** (v. 36) in its true spiritual sense (**free indeed**), both from sin's penalty (justification) and sin's power (sanctification).

LESSON NUGGET – The people were in bondage to Rome and to the law of Moses, yet they said they were free! In verse 35, Jesus may have been referring to Isaac and Ishmael (Genesis 21:8-21), since the Jews had mentioned Abraham

(John 8:33). The Son makes you free (John 8:36), so trust Him and follow Him. His truth makes you free (John 8:32), so study it, believe it, and obey it. Satan imposes slavery that seems like freedom (2 Peter 2:19); Jesus gives you a yoke that sets you free (Matthew 11:28-30).

Sources: Moody Bible Commentary, Standard Lesson Commentary, and The Essential Everyday Bible Commentary