

Dr. David L. Turner, The Gospel of John, Session 10, John 8:12-59, Podcast Audio Overview

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All right, let's jump right in. John chapter 8 today. This one's known for its tension, right? Some really provocative stuff from Jesus.

It is. You've sent us Dr. David Turner's lecture on it, and wow, it looks like we've got some intense theology to unpack. John 8 is fascinating, isn't it? It really highlights the growing conflict between Jesus and the religious leaders.

You're telling me. It's like electric. Okay, so for our deep dive today, let's set the scene.

We're in Jerusalem, Feast of Booths. Yeah. Things are already kind of heated from chapter 7. Exactly.

We find Jesus teaching in the temple courts, and he kicks things off with this powerful declaration, I am the light of the world. Okay, light and darkness. Classic imagery.

Right. But what's the deeper meaning here? Like, why that metaphor in this context? Well, think about it. For John, light represents truth, knowledge, and the path to salvation through Jesus.

Darkness, on the other hand, well, it's the opposite. Ignorance, sin, being lost spiritually. So when Jesus says, I am the light of the world, he's not just being poetic.

He's claiming to be that sole source of true spiritual enlightenment, the only way out of that darkness. Lulled claim, especially considering his audience. I mean, he's surrounded by the religious elite, the Pharisees, the scribes, the keepers of tradition, experts on God's law, or so they say.

You're absolutely right. And this claim does not sit well with them at all. They challenge Jesus immediately, saying his testimony is invalid because he's basically bearing witness to himself, trying to use their own legal system against him.

Hold on. So they're saying Jesus can't be his own witness. That's a tough spot for him to be in.

It is. But Jesus is clever. He counters by appealing to their own law, the one requiring two witnesses for a valid testimony.

He says, and I'm paraphrasing, even though I testify on my own behalf, my words are true because I speak what the Father has given me to say. And your law says the testimony of two witnesses is valid. Well, I am one witness, and the Father who sent me is the other.

Whoa. So he's turning their legal system against them. It's like he's saying God himself is backing me up.

Exactly right. He's highlighting his unique relationship with God, the Father, using it to back up his claims. But the Pharisees, not convinced, are digging in their heels, refusing to accept his authority.

Of course they are. And then just when things couldn't get more tense, Jesus announces he's going away to a place they can't follow. Gotta leave them scratching their heads.

It does. This statement throws everyone off. They start speculating about what he means.

Some even wonder if he's talking about suicide. Suicide. That seems extreme.

It does, doesn't it? But remember, they don't get who Jesus is or his mission. They're still working with this limited understanding of the Messiah. So they struggle to grasp his words.

Okay. So if he's not talking about suicide, where is he going that they can't follow? He's talking about going back to the Father after his death and resurrection. It's a concept that's hard for them now because they haven't seen the crucifixion or the resurrection.

Like he's speaking a language they don't know yet. Like explaining the internet to someone who's never seen a computer. Exactly.

And this disconnect, this lack of understanding, it becomes even more clear in the next part where things get really dramatic. This is where it gets good. Jesus tells some people who claim to be God's chosen people that they actually belong to their father, the devil.

Ouch. It's a provocative statement for sure. And it's meant to be.

Jesus is trying to shock them into seeing the gap between their beliefs and their actions, calling out their hypocrisy. But isn't this a bit much? How can he say that to people who supposedly believe in him? Doesn't sound very loving. It comes down to what it means to be a disciple of Jesus, especially in John.

It's not just saying you believe. True belief, according to John, must come with a changed life. Actions that match up with God's will.

So not just talking the talk. You've got to walk the walk too. Precisely.

And this idea isn't new in John. Remember in chapter two, Jesus cleanses the temple. He calls them out for making his father's house a den of robbers.

Right. He's challenging superficial faith back then, calling for a deeper commitment, a real change of heart. Exactly.

And for those who won't walk that path, their claims of belief, they ring hollow. So by saying they belong to their father, the devil, Jesus is highlighting their spiritual disconnect, not saying they're literally the devil's kids, but that their choices, their behavior, reflect a different spiritual lineage. So he's drawing this contrast.

True discipleship, a life changed by obedience versus a faith that's all talk. Exactly. And this theme, genuine versus superficial belief, it'll keep coming up as we go.

But before we get there, let's talk about another one of Jesus's provocative statements, the one that really sends the crowd into a frenzy. Before Abraham was, I am. Talk about a bombshell.

That's an understatement. It's like he dropped a grenade into their theological world. But before we get into the fallout, break it down.

Why is this statement so huge? What's the big deal with saying I am? Well, on the surface, it might seem simple, just saying I exist, right? But this is Jesus. He speaks in metaphors, layers of meaning. And I am is so much more than just existing.

It's a direct echo of God's self-revelation to Moses in Exodus. Remember when God tells Moses his name is I am, W-H-O, I am? Oh, right. That's the name Yahweh, right? The most sacred name for God in Judaism.

Exactly. So when Jesus uses this phrase, he's not claiming to be just a teacher or prophet. He's claiming to be God himself, the one and only Yahweh.

Whoa. No wonder the crowd wants to stone him for blasphemy. He's directly challenging their core beliefs about God.

Absolutely. It completely shatters their idea of the Messiah. And the fact that Jesus says this so casually, so matter-of-factly, makes it even more shocking.

Okay. So we got this pattern in John 8. Jesus makes a bold claim. People react strongly, usually with opposition, and then things escalate.

You've picked up on a key element here. There's a back-and-forth, this building tension throughout the chapter, like a pressure cooker about to explode. Dr. Turner actually does a great job breaking down this escalating conflict, even going back to chapter 7 to show the rising tension.

Want to explore that. Absolutely. That could be helpful to understand how all these pieces fit together.

Where does this pattern start, and how does it build to that I am statement? Well, if we go back to the end of chapter 7, we see Jesus is already teaching in the temple courts, and people are buzzing about whether he's the one they're trying to kill. Then things escalate when he teaches again, and they actually make an attempt on his life. Yeah.

Things get serious quickly. It's like someone cranked up the heat. And this pattern- claim and conflict- keeps going.

He talks about going away, which confuses everyone. And then there's that incredible teaching on the Holy Spirit, which leaves the guy sent to arrest him totally baffled. Like they're chasing a ghost.

Every time they think they've got him, he slips away. Exactly. And it all leads to this debate in the Jewish council where Nicodemus remembers him, the guy who came to Jesus at night back in chapter 3. He tries to bring some reason into the situation, but he gets shut down pretty fast.

It's like they're so focused on their own power struggle that they can't even hear a different opinion, blinded by their agendas. Great way to put it. And then boom, chapter 8, the conflict ramps up.

Jesus claims he's the light of the world, which sparks that whole debate about his testimony. Right. And then he goes back to the confusing talk about leaving, which makes everyone even more anxious.

And then bam, he drops the I am. It's like a match to a powder keg. Totally.

And what's interesting is that even when some people seem to believe in Jesus, like in verse 30, it says some believed in him, but their belief is questioned right away by what they do. It's true. It's like they're swayed for a second by his words, maybe his miracles, but then something happens, and they turn on him.

It makes you think about what John even means by belief, you know? Oh, yeah. It's definitely more than just saying, I believe in you, Jesus. That's one of the most intriguing things about John.

Belief. It's so nuanced, so many layers. It's not a one-time thing.

It's a whole life process of changing, surrendering. Dr. Turner talks about perseverance, this idea that true faith is marked by a real commitment to Jesus, to his teachings that sticks, not just a flash in the pan. So it's not enough to be impressed by Jesus.

You've got to follow him, even when it gets tough, even when it makes you question everything. You got it. And that reminds me of the analogy Jesus uses later in John 15: the vine and the branches.

Oh, right. I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit, he prunes so that it'll be even more fruitful.

Pretty vivid, huh? Totally. If you're really connected to Jesus, a true believer, your life will show it. You'll produce good fruit, so to speak.

Actions that prove your faith is real. And if you don't, if your life doesn't change, if you're not becoming more loving, more compassionate, more committed to following Jesus, well, then it makes you wonder how deep your belief really is. Exactly.

It suggests maybe you're not really connected to the vine, that your faith is more about words than actions. I think that's a challenge for all of us, right? It's easy to say we believe, but are we living like it? Are we producing the kind of fruit Jesus talks about? Definitely something to think about. But going back to the structure of chapter eight, there's something else Dr. Turner mentioned that I'm curious about.

He talked about how important Jesus's relationship with God, the Father, is, especially with all these conflicts. What do you think about that? That's a really important point. Throughout the chapter, Jesus keeps saying that he's not doing his own thing.

He's only doing what the Father told him to do, speaking the Father's words, and ultimately giving glory to the Father, not to himself. So he's like the Father's representative, the one who shows God to the world. Exactly.

And this emphasis on his connection to the Father, that's key to understanding his claim to be God. Remember when the Pharisees say he's lying because he's talking about himself? Jesus points to the Father as his other witness. Right.

He's like, my authority comes from God. I'm not alone here. It's a divine partnership.

Nice. And this theme, Jesus acting as the Father's agent, ambassador to humanity, it adds a lot of weight to his I am statement later. It's not just some guy claiming to be God.

It's someone who's shown he has this unique relationship with the Father. He's not speaking from ego, but from this place of divine authority. I see what you mean.

Now, you said earlier that Dr. Turner really digs into why that I am statement is so explosive. Can we unpack that a little more? I'm still trying to get my head around how much it means and why everyone freaked out so much. Sure.

As we said before, I am Adam directly echoes God's words to Moses in Exodus. That name, Yahweh, is seen as the most sacred, most powerful name for God in Judaism. It means he's self-existent, eternal, completely sovereign.

So when Jesus says it, he's not saying I'm a prophet, or I'm a teacher. He's putting himself on the same level as the God of the Old Testament, the one who made everything. Exactly.

And Dr. Turner makes this really interesting connection to some parts of Isaiah where God uses a similar phrase, I am he, to show how powerful and unique he is. Got any examples? Yeah. In Isaiah 43.10, God says, 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, no God was formed, nor will there be one after me. Wow. So God's basically saying I'm the original, the only one, no gods before me, none after.

Pretty big statement about his identity and power. Definitely. And those verses in Isaiah, they're all about God showing he's in charge.

He's the only true God. So when Jesus uses similar language, I am, he's making a similar claim. He's saying he's the same as the God of Israel, the one who appeared to Moses in the burning bush.

Makes sense why they wanted to stone him. He's basically turning their whole belief system upside down. Their understanding of God, the Messiah, everything they thought they knew, it's all thrown into chaos.

And what's even crazier is how Jesus connects I Am with Abraham. Yeah. He says, before Abraham was born, I am.

Why bring Abraham into it? What's the point? Well, Abraham's the father of the Jewish nation. He's where God's covenant blessings came through. He's like the ultimate patriarch, the foundation of their faith.

So by saying Before Abraham was, I am, Jesus is basically saying I was around even before your most important ancestor. I was here before your faith even started, before your nation began. You got it.

Like he's saying, I'm not just God. I'm the eternal God. I'm outside of time.

And that adds another layer to his claim. It's not just about his authority now. It's about what he is, his existence as the God who was never created.

Mind-blowing stuff, especially for people who believe so strongly in one God who never changes. So we have this super tense chapter full of theological bombshells, and things just keep getting worse. And it ends with Jesus escaping again.

That's right. He gets away from the angry mob. But the things he said, those questions stay with everyone.

The chapter's over. But the controversy, the struggle to understand him, that's not over. Like he's planted this seed of doubt in their minds, and it's going to keep growing even if they try to ignore it.

Exactly. And that's the genius of John. It doesn't give you easy answers.

It makes you really think about these complex ideas, these hard truths. It's a gospel for people who aren't afraid to ask the tough questions, to deal with the mysteries, the things that aren't so clear-cut. It's not for passive readers; that's for sure.

It's for people who really want to dig deep into faith and wrestle with who Jesus is and what it all means. It's a call to move past surface-level understanding and find a faith that changes you from the inside out. Absolutely.

I think that's a great way to lead into our last takeaway from this whole deep dive. This chapter, like all of John's gospel, is a call to action. It's about engaging with the text, not just with your head, but with your heart too.

It's about asking yourself, how would I have reacted if I were in that crowd? It's like John wants us to travel back in time, to put ourselves right there in that crowd, face-to-face with Jesus, and ask, how would I have reacted? Such a powerful question. It takes us beyond just analyzing the text and forces us to really confront what Jesus is saying and what it means for us. It's not just about figuring out what John meant or the historical context.

Those things are important for sure. It's about asking, what does this mean for me now? How does it change how I live, how I think, how I believe? Exactly. It's about letting the truth of this chapter, the truth of Jesus' words, really sink in.

Let it change our lives. And I think that's a great place to leave our listeners with that question hanging in the air, to do some soul-searching. So if you were in that crowd listening to Jesus say these radical things, watching him go head-to-head with the religious leaders, hearing him claim to be the I-am-am, how would you have reacted? Would you have been one of the people picking up stones, threatened by his words, wanting to shut him up? Or would you have been drawn to the light he offered, even if it meant changing everything you thought you knew about God, about faith, about yourself? It's a question worth thinking about, one that might surprise you with what you discover about yourself.

Because let's be real, it's easy to read this chapter from a distance, to judge the people who are against Jesus, to think, "Oh, I would have done things differently. But would we? Would we have been brave enough to stand with him, to embrace his truth, even when it wasn't popular, even when it was dangerous? Makes you think, doesn't it? It invites us to go beyond just studying the Bible, to actually living it out, letting its truth change how we think, how we act, who we are. I love that.

We encourage you to go back to John chapter 8, read it again with fresh eyes, maybe with that humility we just talked about. Dig into the text, see what new things you find, because this chapter, like all of John, it's got so much depth, so many layers to discover. And as you go deeper, as you wrestle with those truths, remember it's a journey, not a destination.

You'll have those aha moments, and you'll have those wait, what moments. There'll be doubt, and there'll be times when things just click. That's it. Embrace the whole journey.

Let the text challenge you, make you think, and ultimately lead you closer to the truth that Jesus represents. Because in the end, that's what John's gospel is all about, right? Yeah. It's about meeting the light of the world and letting it change us from the inside out.

It's about becoming more like Jesus, more loving, more compassionate, more committed to living out his truth. And the world could really use that right now. Couldn't agree more.

So until next time, keep digging deep. Keep asking those tough questions. Keep looking for the light.

It's out there waiting for you to find it, waiting to show you the way. And who knows, maybe the light you find will not only change your life, but it might just change the lives of the people around you too.