

Dr. David L. Turner, John, Session 10, John 8:12-59

6-Min. Video Overview

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Alright, let's get right into it. We're about to jump into one of the most intense, theologically packed chapters in the entire Gospel of John. It's basically a high-stakes showdown in the Jerusalem Temple, but it also kicks off with this really fascinating puzzle right at the very beginning.

And that's where the mystery really starts. I mean, what if I told you that one of the most beloved stories about Jesus—you know the one, with the woman caught in adultery and that famous line in the sand—what if I told you it might not have been the Gospel of John to begin with? So that leads us right into our first big topic. Scholars have a fancy name for this passage.

They call it the Pericope Adulterae, and believe me, it has been the subject of some serious debate for centuries. I mean, we all know the story, right? It's this incredible moment of wisdom and mercy. The religious leaders think they have Jesus backed into a corner, and he just completely flips the script on them, exposing all their hypocrisy without even condemning the woman.

It's powerful stuff. But here's the thing. The scholarly case that this story wasn't originally in John is, well, it's pretty strong.

For starters, when you look at the oldest, most reliable manuscripts we have, it's just not there. Then in later copies, it starts popping up all over the place. Sometimes it's stuck in the Gospel of Luke.

Other times it's at the very end of John. You even see ancient scribes adding little symbols, kind of like an asterisk, to show they weren't sure it belonged there. And get this, one scribe actually left an entire page blank, almost as if he was saying, look, I think a story goes here, but I don't have it, so I'll just save the space.

So what's the bottom line here? Well, the general agreement among most scholars today is that while this story probably wasn't in John's original text, it is very, very likely a true story about Jesus. It was probably a well-known account passed down by word of mouth that a later scribe inserted into the text because it just felt so right. Okay, so with that textual puzzle kind of set to the side for a moment, we can dive into the main event, the part of John 8 that everyone agrees was there from the beginning.

And we drop right back into this incredibly tense scene. Jesus is teaching out in the open, in the temple courts, and his enemies are circling. The rest of this chapter follows this really clear repeating cycle.

You could almost think of it as the chapter's engine. First, Jesus makes a huge, profound statement. Second, that statement immediately sparks an argument.

And third, the argument escalates, and the stakes just keep getting higher and higher. You'll see this pattern play out over and over. And it kicks off with a bang.

Jesus just declares, I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life. So that's step one, the teaching.

And this is a massive claim, pulling on all this deep Old Testament imagery of God himself being the light for his people. And boom, right on cue, here comes step two, the dispute. The Pharisees jump on him immediately, but they do it on legal grounds.

They say, hold on, according to our law, you need two witnesses for your testimony to be valid. They're basically saying, you can't just declare yourself the light of the world. That's not how it works.

And just like that, the fight is on. Now, this next part- this is where it gets serious. It forces us to ask some really tough questions about what it actually means to believe in someone. You know, right in the middle of all this conflict, all this arguing, we get this little glimmer of hope.

As Jesus is speaking, the Bible says many believed in him. And for just a second, you think, wow, he's finally getting through to them. It feels like a breakthrough.

But hold on. The author John immediately asks this question: were they truly believers? Or was this just kind of a shallow momentary agreement? So Jesus decides he's going to put their newfound faith to the test. Right then and there.

He lays out the conditions super clearly. He basically says, hey, real discipleship isn't about a one-time decision. It's about continuing, abiding, holding on to what I'm teaching you.

That's the path to real truth and real freedom. This is the challenge he puts to them. And their reaction is, it's just stunning.

Instead of saying, "Yes, teach us, they get offended. They fire back. We're Abraham's descendants.

We have never been slaves to anyone. They totally miss the point and reject his offer. And the whole conversation just implodes.

This leads Jesus to deliver one of the harshest lines in the Gospels. You belong to your father, the devil. Think about that.

Just a few verses after they believed, they are now his furious opponents. So as you can imagine, things are completely spiraling now. And it's all building to this one final explosive climax.

One of the most jaw-dropping claims Jesus ever makes. At this point, the whole fight really boils down to identity. They're basing their entire identity on being descended from their great ancestor Abraham.

But Jesus keeps claiming his identity comes straight from God the Father. And this final showdown is going to be all about who has the greater claim on Abraham. They think they have him trapped.

After Jesus says that Abraham rejoiced to see his day, they just scoff at him. It's pure ridicule. You're not even 50 years old, and you've seen Abraham? You've got to be kidding me.

You're delusional. And this, this is his answer. He doesn't say, "Before Abraham was, I was.

He says, before Abraham was, I am. He is not just claiming he existed before Abraham. He's claiming a state of timeless, eternal being.

Now, to really get why this was such a bombshell, we have to understand these two little Greek words: ego eimi. For his Jewish audience, hearing this would have sent chills down their spine. It was an unmistakable echo of the sacred name of God.

It's the exact phrase used in the Greek Old Testament in places like Isaiah and Deuteronomy, where God himself declares, I am he, ani hu in Hebrew, to set himself apart as the one true eternal God. Let's be crystal clear about this. Jesus wasn't just claiming to be a special messenger or a prophet.

This was a direct, unapologetic claim to share the very identity and the eternal nature of God himself. And the crowd, oh, they got the message loud and clear. To them, this was the ultimate crime: blasphemy.

And the penalty for blasphemy was death by stoning. So the debate is over. They literally bend down, pick up rocks, and are ready to execute him right there on the spot.

And then in this crazy, mysterious ending, Jesus just slips away and disappears into the crowd. And that leaves us with this final hanging question. John chapter eight takes us on this wild ride from a debate about religious law to a debate about true faith and all the way to a life-or-death confrontation over divine identity.

And it really forces you to wonder: what does it mean when a claim about who you are is so absolute, so cosmic, that the only possible responses are to either fall down in worship or pick up a stone?