

**Who Do You Say That I Am?**  
**John 8:1-59**  
**"I AM The Light of The World"**

**Introduction**

There is a six month time-delay between John Chapter 6 and John Chapter 7. The feeding of the five thousand occurred at the time of Passover, which occurs in the spring of the year. The Feast of Tabernacles or "Sukkot" occurs in the fall of the year. John Chapters 7-8 record for us Jesus' activity at the time of this particular fall feast. The Jews were required to make an annual pilgrimage to the Temple in Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles. The feast was a celebration and commemoration of the days of the Exodus, when the children of Israel lived in tents in the wilderness as God led them to the promised land. The feast was actually quite fun, because each Jewish family would construct for themselves a shelter or "tabernacle" out of palm branches, and they would attend services at the Temple to recall how God had so lovingly provided for His people as they traveled in the wilderness.

Chapter 7 of John's gospel begins with an account of Christ's half brothers trying to persuade Him to go to the feast and "show himself" so that the people in Jerusalem would see the wondrous things that He could do (John 7:1-9). They wanted him to perform for the crowds, so He could become famous. Even Jesus' own family couldn't fully grasp who He truly was and that He was always in perfect alignment with His Father's will. They wanted Him to do tricks like a magician, but He had come to seek and save that which was lost (Luke 19:10). He sent His brothers on ahead to the feast, but stayed behind until they had gone, so that He could go the feast in secret.

On the final day of The Feast of Tabernacles, there was what is called a "Libation Service", in which the priests would draw water from the Pool of Siloam and pour the water upon the altar. This was to commemorate God's provision for His people in the wilderness when He gave them water out of The Rock (Exodus 17), as well as, God's continual provision for His people by giving them life giving water. Jesus cried out in the middle of the ceremony, **"Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in Me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them"**. What Jesus was saying in essence was that HE was the rock that was with Israel in the wilderness (1 Corinthians 10:14), and that anyone who had a spiritual thirst could believe in Him, and they would be filled with "living water" (The Holy Spirit) and would be a source of life to those around them (John 7:37-39). The religious leaders were furious at His interruption of their sacred libation service (7:44-49). Here they were commemorating a work that God had done in the distant past while God Himself was standing in their midst longing to do an even greater work for them, and yet they despised Him for it! THAT my friends is called spiritual blindness.

The Priests wanted Jesus arrested, but the temple guards were afraid to do so. The next morning at dawn, He was back again teaching at the Temple, so the Pharisees decided to set a trap for Him. They were hoping to discredit Him publicly so that the crowds would turn on Him. They brought to Him a woman supposedly caught in the act of adultery and asked Jesus what should be done to her for her crimes. The events that followed as a result were completely astonishing. Jesus not only outsmarted them at their own game, but he used the opportunity to once again make the case that he was in fact God in the flesh. He spoke to the crowds and said, **"I AM the light of the world, whoever follows Me will never walk in darkness, but have the light of life."** (John 8:12). He is The light that will LEAD US OUT OF BONDAGE, LEAD US INTO TRUTH, and LEAD US TO THE PROMISED LAND.

**LEAD US OUT OF BONDAGE**

The poor woman must have been terrified as these self righteous Pharisees had her flung to the ground there in front of Jesus as he taught. John tells us that this happened as He was teaching in "The Court of Women" which was the place in the Temple where the offerings were collected (vs. 20). The Temple courts were divided into sections. The outer section was called "The Court of The Gentiles". It

was designed for non-Jews who came to worship The One True God. The next level was The "Court of Women" where Jewish men and women could congregate for certain ceremonies. After this there were fifteen steps that led up into what was called The Court of the Israelites, where only Jewish men could go, followed by The Court of Priests and The Holy Place, and finally The Holy of Holies. Jesus was teaching in The Court of Women, because it was a place where all Jews could come.

During the Feast of Tabernacles, a large candelabra was placed in The Court of Women as a reminder of the Pillar of Fire that led the Israelites through the wilderness (**Exodus 13:21**). That Pillar was God Himself and was called The Shekinah (Glory of God) by the Hebrews. During the day God would shroud His brilliant glory with a cloud, but by night his Shekinah would light up the darkness so that the children of Israel could travel as He led the way. During The Feast of Tabernacles, the candelabra was lit to remind the Jewish worshippers of The Shekinah of God that was once in their midst. Isn't it sad when the presence of God is gone from a place, and a candle is lit to take His place? I've been inside some pretty dead churches in my time, and they all seem to have one thing in common. They are big on ceremony and ritual and short on the presence of The Holy Spirit.

The woman caught in adultery was cast into the midst of this setting to be used as a trap. No thought was given to her feelings. To the religious leaders, she was simply a means to an end. If they had been so enamored with justice, then where was the man who had shared in the immorality with her? The Pharisees glared at Jesus and scornfully declared, **"Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. What do YOU say?" (vs. 4-5).** Jesus stooped down and began to write upon the ground (**vs 6**). No one knows what He wrote, but it had a significant impact upon the woman's accusers, for they all began to leave one by one.

For many years, I have almost been obsessed by what He had written. The Bible doesn't tell us what it was, so we can only speculate. I used to believe that He had written some of the sins that her accusers had committed themselves, and this had caused them to leave. But more recently, I noticed something that I had never seen before. I had assumed that Jesus wrote whatever He had written in the dirt, but upon further study, The Court of Women had a floor made of stone. He didn't write in the sand, but rather, He wrote in the dust that was covering the stone floor of the temple court! Think about that for a moment. He took His finger and wrote something in stone, and then said, **"If any of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her"**. Why does this seem so familiar? The finger of God writing upon stone. Do you see where I'm going with this? I believe that He wrote the Ten Commandments! Just like He did for Moses on the top of Mount Sinai (**Exodus 31:18**). Makes perfect sense doesn't it? I mean here were these self-righteous Pharisees quoting The Law of Moses, and Jesus stooped down and wrote it on the stone floor. I'll bet that the handwriting matched perfectly! The Pharisees had been beaten at their own game, for the one who stooped down before them that morning was not just some teacher from Galilee. He was the author of The Law, and He was fully aware that NONE of them had been able to live up to it. As they quietly left the court, He forgave the woman and stood up to say to the crowd, **"I AM the Light of the World. Whoever follows Me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."** (**vs. 12**).

What exactly was He saying? He was telling the people who had ears to hear that He WAS The Shekinah that led the children of Israel through the darkness in the wilderness! If any of them were living in the dark bondage of sin, He could lead them out of it, just as He had led the Israelites out of the bondage of slavery! What an awesome image of Jesus telling these people that the very same God that they had been celebrating all week was standing in their midst and longing to lead them once again out of their bondage. He would forgive them, the same as He had just forgiven the sinful woman who had just been flung at His feet like a piece of worthless trash to be carelessly discarded upon the ground. She may not have mattered to them, but to Him, she was worth dying for. He wanted to show her the way. This woman and anyone else who wasn't so spiritually blind that they could not see Him for who He was. He is The Light that longed to lead them out of darkness. He is The Great I AM.

## **LEAD US INTO TRUTH**

The religious leaders were incensed that He was claiming such greatness for Himself and challenged His right to make such statements without additional witnesses to back up His testimony. Jewish law required at least two witnesses to make a proclamation of truth. Jesus let them know in a hurry that He most certainly had another witness to back up His claims. His Witness was His heavenly Father, the One Who had sent Him to lead the lost world to the truth. He made it plain to them that if they could not see Him for Who He was, then it was obvious that they didn't know God. For if they knew God, they would have recognized Him, for They are One and the same (**vs. 16**). The Pharisees became all the more enraged, but Jesus held His ground. He told them that they were from below, but He was from above (**vs. 23**), and if they did not believe in him, that they would die in their sins apart from forgiveness and apart from the Truth. He said to them, **"I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I AM 'the one I claim to be' then you will all die in your sins"**. The phrase "who I claim to be" has actually been added by the translators. The original text simply reads, **"if you do not believe that I AM"**. Here again, He is claiming to be God, and they knew exactly what He meant.

He came to lead the world into Truth, just as He had led the children of Israel to Mount Sinai to receive God's Word in the wilderness. Here He stood; The Light, The Shekinah, the radiance of God's Glory (**Hebrews 1:3**) speaking to them absolute truth, and they could not hear. He goes on to tell them, **"When you have lifted up The Son of Man (Crucified Him), then you will know that I AM."** (**vs. 28**). He would prove that He was telling the truth about who he was with His death, burial, and resurrection. His witness was truth, and The Bible says that as He was speaking many put their faith in Him (**vs. 30**). Though the religious zealots could not see the truth, many of those who had come to hear Him teach that morning knew the truth when they heard it.

Jesus turned to those new believers and said, **"If you hold to My teachings, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."** (**vs. 31-32**). What a beautiful picture of salvation. Any of us who can truly accept the words of Christ as truth, we will be FREE! Free from chains of sin that held us in bondage, free from the fear of being at enmity with God, and free from the hopelessness that we could never enter Heaven. **"If The Son sets you free, you will be free indeed."** (**vs.36**). Do you want to be free this morning? Who do YOU say that He is?

## **LEAD US TO THE PROMISED LAND**

The indignant Jews begin to argue with Him that they are true sons of Abraham, and therefore in right standing with God. They thought that they didn't need to be set free. They believed that they were just fine because of who they were. Their heritage would assure them of their salvation, but nothing could have been further from the truth. Jesus tells them that if Abraham was truly their father then they would do what Abraham did (**vs. 39**). I LOVE that verse! Think for a moment about just what He was implying. What exactly did Abraham do? The Bible says that **"Abraham BELIEVED God, and it was credited to him as righteousness"** (**Genesis 15:6**). Jesus was telling them that when He had spoken the truth to Abraham, the old patriarch, unlike them, had believed! The same voice that had called out to Abraham, was calling out to them on this day in the Temple Court. Here He was, yet again, claiming to be God. Abraham had believed His message, but these self righteous Jewish leaders had not. Thus proving themselves be children of the devil and not of Abraham (**vs.44**). As you might have guessed, that little nugget of truth didn't go over very well at all! They were ready to stone Him. How ironic that He had come to offer eternal life, and they wanted to kill Him for it. Little did they know, that when the proper time was at hand, He would indeed allow them take His life, and that His death would provide the forgiveness that would be necessary to obtain the eternal life He offered. They thought that by killing Him they could eradicate His Gospel of Truth, but his death would cause His message of Truth to light up the whole world! Though these Pharisees were surely not true sons of Abraham, many other spiritual "sons" of Abraham were sure to come. For ALL who believe in The Son of God are Abrahams true descendants (**Galatians 3:29**).

Abraham had believed in Jesus so much when He met Him, that he was willing to follow Him to a land of promise that he had never seen (**Genesis 12:1**). Abraham had simply followed, by faith. The children of Israel had been led to the Land of Promise by The Pillar of Fire (*Shekinah*), and in a similar but spiritual way, Jesus has promised to lead all those who will believe in Him to The Promised Land as well. It is a place we call Heaven, and though we have never seen it, we know by faith that it IS, thanks to Him, our final destination. He is leading us home by His light. Jesus told those unbelieving Jews that morning, that Abraham rejoiced when He had met Him (**vs. 56**). To which they shouted, **“You are not even fifty years old! So how is it that YOU have seen Abraham?” (vs. 57).** To which The LORD replied, **“I tell you the truth, before Abraham was I AM”.**

I’ve often wondered if it thundered when He spoke those words.

Jesus is The Bread of Life, and He is The Light of The World. The Shekinah of God that came to lead us out of the darkness of sin into God’s Truth and into the promise land. All that is required of each of us is to believe. To believe enough to follow. Who do you say that He is this morning?

Jesus, we believe that you are The Holy Almighty God, The Bread of Life, and The Light of The World. You are The Great I AM.

And ALL of God’s people said... TRUTH!!!