

Daily Bible Study Commentary by Pastor Steve

We're excited to have you digging deeper into the Word. The best way to use this study guide is to read the Bible verse(s) first, then Pastor Steve's commentary. God bless you.

John 8:20

v20: John tells us Jesus spoke these words in the area within the Court of the Women called the "treasury." It was the place where the offering boxes were located (Mk 12:41-42). John's purpose in telling us this is to show us how fearlessly and publicly Jesus ministered. Later on, when He was on trial before Caiaphas, Jesus was questioned about what He taught. He replied, "I have spoken openly to the world; I always taught in synagogues and in the temple where all the Jews come together, and I spoke nothing in secret" (Jn 18:20). By mentioning that Jesus was in the treasury when this intense dialogue took place, John is proving that point. Jesus was teaching openly in the very heart of the temple, yet no one tried to arrest Him because God was protecting Him until His "hour" arrived. That "hour" would be Passover, about six months later.

John 8:21

v21: Jesus repeated a statement He made a few days earlier. During the Feast of Booths He'd said, "You will seek for Me, but not find Me, because where I am you cannot come" (literal) (Jn 7:34). What He said this time was not an exact repetition of that, but it is close. He said, "I go away, and you will seek Me, and will die in your sin; where I am going you cannot come." This repetition is not a coincidence. John introduces it with these words, "Therefore, He said again..." In other words, this is an important statement that Jesus intended to say again. But when He repeated it He added this phrase, "For unless you believe that I am, you will die in your sin" (literal) (v24).

John 8:22-23

v22: It's important to keep this dialogue in perspective. Jesus is not talking to the crowds; He is talking to religious leaders who were aggressively confronting Him. It was to them that He said, "Where I am going, you cannot come." In other words, when He left this earth (by dying on the cross), He would return to heaven. His point is that He is not simply a confused rabbi from Galilee; He is God's Son who came from heaven. They responded by wondering aloud if He meant suicide. Would He kill Himself to escape arrest? **v23:** Jesus answered, "You are from below, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world." The term "world" (cosmos) may mean many things, but there is one thing it certainly means. It is the atmosphere of ungodly culture and doubt which surrounds all of us. In other words, those who are "of the world" are those who are following other humans, not God. They let others do their thinking for them. It's a form of passivity. Rather than spend the energy to investigate a matter for myself, I follow along. It's easier to believe what everyone around me believes. But if these Pharisees were going to see Jesus for who He really is, they would have to ignore the peer-pressure, listen to what He was saying, watch what He was doing and use their own discernment. They would have to separate themselves from their "world."

John 8:24

v24: He told these Pharisees that they won't go to heaven because there is something they do not believe. What is it they don't believe? Jesus said they don't believe "I am..." And no, He didn't say what it was He is. It's possible He expected them to finish the statement with some of the things He had said recently, such as, "I am... the Light of the world" (v12), or "I am... the One who knows where I came from and where I am going" (v14). But it is also possible He means by "I am..." something that He was going to say at the very end of this conversation (Jn 8:58): that He is the "I Am" who existed before Abraham. That means He is the "I Am" who revealed Himself to Moses at the burning bush (Ex 3:14; Dt 32:39). In other words, He is asking them to believe that He is the divine Son of God, and if they don't, He says they will "die in their sins."

John 8:24

v24 (continued): When we read this dialogue between Jesus and the Pharisees, we might assume that He was asking them to believe something so unfamiliar to someone raised in Judaism that no one could believe it. Who could blame the Pharisees for doubting that this man who was standing there talking to them was God's Son, that He could be the "I Am" of the Old Testament? But in fact, John will soon say that "many came to believe in Him" (v30). And he specifically mentions that those numbers included "Jews," meaning religious leaders or Pharisees. So what Jesus is saying about Himself is not foreign to their ear. Their debate was not about could such a thing be (could God have a son, and could that Son become a man)? Their debate was about whether or not Jesus was the Son of God for whom they had been waiting (Mt 26:63; Ps 2:7) It's important to note that many of these people who were highly educated in the Bible, believed His claim.

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John 8:25

v25: Jesus warned this group that unless they believed in Him they would die in their sins (v24). Now we hear their response: They asked, "Who are you?" Given all Jesus has said about Himself this cannot be a sincere question. They must have been attempting to lure Him into saying something they could consider to be blasphemous. He replied by asking them to recall the things He had already said about Himself. From the very beginning of His ministry He had never hidden His identity. So in effect, He said to them, "I am not going to answer that question again; you already know My answer. It hasn't changed."

John 8:26

v26: Then He added, "I have many things to say and judge about you." These religious leaders had been constantly examining His words and deeds and finding fault with Him. And if He had chosen to do so, Jesus said He could easily have found fault with them as well. He could have devoted much of His preaching to exposing their hypocrisy. None of them were able to live up to the standards they themselves preached. But the Father had not sent Him to criticize people. He'd sent Him to proclaim a positive message; He'd sent Him to speak the things He had heard the Father say; He'd sent Him to offer salvation. Why? Because the Father who sent Jesus is "true."

John 8:26

v26 (continued): In the context of this debate between Jesus and these Jewish leaders, Jesus' statement that the Father is true does not primarily mean that the Father's words are accurate or genuine. That's what Greeks would mean by the word true. By saying that the One who sent Him is true, Jesus means that the Father was being true to His covenant with Israel; He has not forgotten His promise to be merciful and rescue them, which is why the things He instructs His Son to say are primarily about salvation, not criticism. However, on occasion it was necessary for Jesus to address the hypocrisy of His critics because they were trying to persuade people to reject Him (Mt 23:1-36).