

Notes on John 8

© David H. Linden Action International Ministries

John 8 is a continuation of John 7. Keeping these segments together maintains a continuity intended by the Apostle John. This is very similar to John 9 & the first half of John 10, where it is even more important to read those verses as a unit. Chapter divisions can be misleading. (The later addition to this Gospel of the woman caught in adultery, in my opinion, disrupts the flow of what John wrote. See the box below for reason to conclude that 7:53-8:11 was not in the original text).

If we read 8:12 as part of the same conversation found in chapter 7, then both chapters are part of Jesus' visit to Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles. At that feast there were ceremonies related to water and light. In 7:37-39 Jesus presented Himself as the one giving the water of the Spirit; in 8:12 He picked up the other connection to Tabernacles and proclaimed that He is the Light of the World.

The apostle usually made quite clear by his introductory words whether he was beginning a different context. He might point out a different location as in 5:1 and 6:1, or that it was a different time as in 7:1 where it says, "after these things", or in the NIV, "after this". 8:12 says, "Jesus spoke to them again," so we have good reason to think that this is a dialogue continued.

In John 9 & 10 John intentionally drew a sharp contrast between Christ as the Good Shepherd in chapter 10, and the Pharisees as false shepherds in chapter 9 for abusing the man born blind. Here in John 7 & 8, with both chapters related to Tabernacles, John presents a double contrast:

1. Jesus as the giver of the Spirit is the giver of life, 7:37-39. The devil is the murderer who takes away life (8:44).
2. Jesus as the light of the world is the giver of truth. Those who follow will not be in darkness. The devil, as a liar and the father of lies, leads away from truth into darkness (8:44).

If we keep John 7 & 8 together, we benefit from the full contrast John made. That Christ is the truth and the life (14:6) has been shown in advance of chapter 14. Satan is the master of deceit. His gift to all who believe him is death.

Chapter 7 opened with the danger to Jesus' life in Judea. John reports an attempt to arrest Him through temple guards (7:32,45). In 7:44 no one laid hands on Him, and they did not in 8:20, but this story ends at 8:59 with an attempt to stone him. In both chapters Jesus mentioned their desire to murder Him (7:19 & 8:40). I suggest this fortifies the sense that this is one context. This is even stronger when we observe that in both chapters Jesus asserted that He would leave and they would not find Him (7:33-36; 8:21,22). It is clear the Lord was speaking to the same people when it says, "*Jesus said to them again.*" In the same setting, He was repeating what He had said earlier *to them*.

If we view John 7 & 8 as a unit, then we have here the longest sustained conversation between Jesus and His enemies to be found in any of the four Gospels. (Thus in my seminars, I try to lecture on John 7 & 8 on the same day.) At this feast Jesus offered Himself as light and His Spirit as life. This was a gracious gospel message offering both *power to live and direction in life* to those in need of both. It was answered by blasphemous insults (7:20 & 8:48) and attempted murder (8:59). John 8 is famous for the hostile contradictions of Christ that it records (Hebrews 12:3). He is questioned about His Father, and He identified their father as the devil. John 8 is also a treasure having one of the strongest affirmations of the deity of Christ that ever came from the mouth of our Lord. For those with a shallow profession of faith, the Lord gave a penetrating analysis of the fruit that is consistent with genuine faith. Only those who remain in His word are His disciples.

Was the Story of the Woman Taken in Adultery an Original Part of this Gospel?

The strong evidence is that it was not! We must remember that 400 years ago the King James Version was translated from Greek texts that were much later than many that have been discovered since. Since the more ancient and more reliable texts do not have 7:53 – 8:11 in them, the NIV wisely places lines at the end of 7:52 and before 8:11 with this caveat: "The earliest manuscripts and many other ancient witnesses do not have John 7:53 – 8:11." The ESV gives a similar notice, "The earliest manuscripts do not include John 7:53 – 8:11." The ESV footnotes that not all later manuscripts place this addition in the same location. One even sticks it in Luke, another near the end of the Gospel of John in chapter 21!

[Continued] 8:1-11 is absent not only in early Greek manuscripts, but in all early translations of this Gospel into other languages. We have no record of any Greek Father prior to 1100 AD referring to it, and then later the first man to do so noted that accurate copies of this Gospel do not contain the disputed section. Later when it did begin to show up in Greek manuscripts, it appeared in different places, such as following 7:36. Why such unusual variations? The simple answer is that it was not in the original at all. On top of all this, when these verses began to be included, some scribes added asterisks to show that they knew something was different about it. The evidence is overwhelming that, in spite of the familiarity and fondness people in the church have for this story, we should not consider it a legitimate part of the text. Unfortunately, there are people more familiar with this story (whether it belongs in Scripture or not) than they are with what the rest of John 8 does say.

8:12 In the context of 7:52, Jesus responded in 8:12 to the challenge of whether He was a true prophet because He was from Galilee. Saying, “I am the Light of the World” is a way to say He was a prophet. Perhaps the Lord had Isaiah 9:1,2 in mind! God had predicted through Isaiah that the people in Galilee would see a great light, so as 8:12 says, they would not need to walk in darkness. His promise was also one of new life for those in the shadow of death. Since death comes from sin, an effective salvation must be directed to sin. Christ the Savior is God’s only answer to this, and He alone gives eternal life. Isaiah also pictures deliverance from an enemy in 9:4-6. This too parallels John 8 where sin is enslaving, and the devil is the oppressor (8:38,44).

Furthermore, Isaiah 9:1 refers to “*Galilee of the Gentiles*”! When Christ said He was the Light of the *world*, this fits the Isaiah prophecy. When Isaiah 9:3,6 said that both the nation and His government would be increased, this must have in mind the inclusion of Gentiles within the expanded nation of Israel. In the generation after Christ, the Romans by their massacres in the Jewish wars of AD 66-70 greatly *decreased* the number of Jews, but Christ the Light of the world gathered many Gentiles as His people. Thereby the Son of David enlarged the nation of believers. (Note Isaiah 14:1,2 and 54:1-3.) Without Christ as the Light of the *world*, the prophecy in Isaiah 9 of a *multiplied* nation (ESV) would be unfulfilled. The salvation of a large number of Gentiles is not a doctrine confined to the NT or the activity in the Book of Acts (see Isaiah 2:2-4). The sad thing after Jesus’ famous words in v.12 is the stream of challenges and contradictions indicating Jewish rejection of Him. This appears in every chapter from John 5 to 12. Nevertheless, He is the Light of the world; though the majority of Jews would not have Him (1:11); many born of different blood did (1:13).

The setting is still the great Feast of Tabernacles. That feast had water drawing ceremonies, (fitting 7:37-39) and at night they would light four huge lamps at the temple. With no competing electric lights, this made for a huge glow over Jerusalem. It was in this context that Jesus announced He was the light of the world (far beyond Jerusalem) and the light of life. In light of Psalm 27:1, “*The LORD is my light and my salvation...*” That psalm used the Divine Name, Yahweh. For Christ to say that He is the Light is another way He indicated that He was the God of Israel.

Christ as the Light Apart from Matthew’s obvious quotation of Isaiah 9, (see above) little is said in the Synoptics of Christ being the light. Simeon held Jesus as a baby and referred to God’s salvation in his arms as “*a light for revelation to the Gentiles...*” (Luke 2:32). Simeon’s words fit Isaiah 42:6 and 49:6. It is the Gospel of John that returns to this metaphor repeatedly. In his Prologue, John presents Christ as the light in vv.4,5,7,8,9. It appears again in 3:19-21, but 8:12 is the first time Jesus uses *light* to describe Himself. In His final public words the Lord pleaded with His hearers to put their trust in Him as the Light, for they would have that light with them for only a very short time (12:35,36). Then in the apostle’s summary of Jesus’ words, he reiterated Jesus’ cry to His people, “*When a man believes in me, he does not believe in me only, but in the one who sent me. When he looks at me, he sees the one who sent me. I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness.*” (12:44-46).

His implied claim of deity was enhanced even more when Jesus, speaking as the Light, made promises to those who follow Him. Israel had the shekinah glory visible at night in a column of fire. It was that presence of God visible in the cloud and fire that Israel followed. “*For the cloud of the LORD was on the tabernacle by day, and*

fire was in it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel throughout all their journeys,” (Exodus 40:38; see also Numbers 9:15-23). That glory was the visible manifestation of God. By becoming a man, Christ was the glory of God in human flesh (1:14), calling on Israel in 8:12 to follow Him as their Lord. In Deuteronomy 1:32,33 Israel did not believe the Lord Who had gone ahead of them in fire by night to show them the way. That generation did not believe, did not follow, and did not enter into God’s eternal rest (Hebrews 3:7 – 4:11). Likewise in Jesus’ day, those hating Christ, the Light and Wisdom of God, loved death (Proverbs 8:36).

This is the second “I am” in this Gospel where Jesus said I am something, such as bread (see 6:35-51). Some uses of “*I am*” without the pronoun (in Greek) are not making the same kind of bold affirmation as in 8:12. For Christ to say, “*I am the Light of the world,*” is to use “I am” language of the kind the Lord God used of Himself many times in Isaiah 41-51. (Note Isaiah 48:12; see also v.58 below).

Just as in 3:16, there is in Jesus’ words a double benefit, one negative and one positive:

- The one following Him will be spared darkness, confusion and error. He will know truth and thus will not succumb to the deceit of the devil. Isaiah also connected relief from darkness as being delivered from distress and gloom (Isaiah 8:21,22 & 9:1-3). Coming to the light is more than embracing truth; the truth embraced brings joy to the soul. Those who refuse God’s word have no dawn, and thus no hope of a brighter day (Proverbs 4:18,19).
- The one following Christ has the light of life. The Apostle John was relentless in keeping before his readers that in Christ there is eternal life. V.12 says the same truth in slightly different words. In this verse life is promised in the context of propositional truth. The gospel is a message of facts, information, and doctrinal affirmations. There is a God; He has been sinned against; He has sent His Son; Christ alone is the solution to our massive problem with the God who would otherwise reject us. To be saved we come to the Person Who is the Light, AND we accept the truth He brings to see. When John concluded his Gospel in 20:30,31, he restated his unwavering goal that we might believe *that* Jesus is the Christ, *that* He is the Son of God, and *that* by believing we have life in His name. To come to Jesus Christ the Light is to receive the gift of life and to know that we have it (1 John 2:9-14).

8:13 The response to God was to challenge Jesus’ claim as unsubstantiated. It is true that the witness of one person is not valid to settle a dispute in court. It is not invalid because one person testifies. The question is whether such testimony stands alone without any support. The Lord then made clear that there *was* additional testimony; the other Witness was God Himself.

8:14 The Lord spoke as an expert witness. He knew where He had come from. He was not repeating an opinion derived from others. If a man claims that gasoline burns easily, his testimony should not be rejected as mere opinion. One could use a match to verify the testimony. Jesus knew His origin, but those rejecting His testimony did not. In ignorance they denied His claim. Later He will remind them again that His Father was a second testimony.

8:15,16 In this same context Jesus had warned against making judgments on mere appearances (7:24). In saying that, the Lord showed what kind of decisions they were making, decisions from very limited observations, decisions without all the facts. Now in 8:14, Jesus points out that their decisions were according to the flesh. John uses flesh in contrast to the Spirit. By the flesh no one could discover whether Jesus had come from heaven. Yet they were captive to expectations of men. People still argue that they do not believe in God because He has not communicated with them in the way they insist He must in order for them to believe. God does not salute His creatures and say, “Yes, sir”. He is God and may reveal what He chooses and how He chooses. John gives responses of Jesus to show how comprehensive that revelation was. (See the notes on John 5:30-47.) John reports only a few miracles, but he says much about how their significance. (Note: **2:11,23; 3:2; 6:2; 7:21,31; 9:16; 10:25,32,38; 11:47; 12:37; and 14:11.**)

Jesus had said that judgment was committed to Him in 5:27. He is not denying that in v.15, as v.16 makes clear. He simply means that He does not judge as they do. They judge from the limitations of human flesh, which

includes bias and ignorance. Christ judges in a different way, with the knowledge that God has, and in communion with His Father. Unlike human judgment, *“Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account,”* (Hebrews 4:13). Whenever Jesus judges, though it was not the mission of His First Coming (3:17), it will be right.

It is a valuable exercise to follow how much Jesus spoke of His Father. Just using a concordance and counting the word *Father* will not show the full picture. There are also pronouns referring to the Father. He is mentioned in more than one way. The Lord sometimes called Him “the One Who sent Me”! Jesus’ fervent love of His Father dominates this Gospel.

8:17-18 Some find it odd that the Lord would call God’s law (and thus His law!) *your own Law* when speaking to the Jewish leaders. By this He simply acknowledged that they too confessed it as God’s and professed it as their own with fervor. He reminded them that the law they so ardently affirmed recognized that two witnesses were necessary for valid testimony in a dispute (Deuteronomy 19:15). He had support for His testimony about Himself. He had the Father. If Jesus continued at this point to elaborate on how the Father had testified to Him as the Light of the World, the Apostle John does not report it here. Other parts of this Gospel do, such as 5:30-47.

8:19 At this point the conversation settles on the topic of Jesus’ Father. Various fathers, whether good or bad, whether God, man or the devil, are connected in some way to the remainder of the chapter. Asking where Jesus’ Father is, might have been a ploy to bring up Joseph as a human father. My strong suspicion is that Jesus’ background had been vigorously researched by the leaders. When they said that *they* were not illegitimate children, that way of putting it may have been designed to cast doubt whether Jesus was the result of fornication. They were certain God was not His Father. The Lord tells them they do not know His Father, but He said, “Me or My Father”. This Gospel teaches in a number of places that to know One is to know the Other! (**1:18; 5:19; 10:30; 14:7**). This shows that the virgin birth of Christ also makes clear Who Jesus is.

The essence of the gospel message is that from our standpoint that Christ is the way to the Father. From God’s standpoint Christ is the way by which He saves. So Jesus’ words must be taken in their full significance. He was not exaggerating: to know Him is to know the Father. Though the Jews hearing Jesus’ words were covenant people, they were still in darkness, in spiritual death, in deceptive self-confidence, in pride of culture and ancestry, and in their sin (8:21). In chapter 4, a Samaritan woman came to know the God of Israel by means of the Messiah she met at a well near her village. Here in John 8 in the Temple of the Lord, Israel’s teachers knew neither their God nor the One He had sent. They did not know the Christ they professed that they were looking for. It is sobering to see how sin deceives those who trust in themselves that they are righteous (Luke 18:9-14).

8:20 Jesus was teaching in a very public location. It was probably in the court of the women, since women had access to the offering box (Mark 12:41,42). In spite of the eagerness to arrest Him found in chapter 7, and be rid of Him forever, Jesus continued to teach very publicly. There was this overriding reason. It was not the time God had appointed for Him to be captured and crucified. That was waiting for the next Passover. Meanwhile the Lord had more to do. According to 11:9, there were still hours of daylight (and ministry) left before the darkness of Calvary came. At this fall Feast of Tabernacles, His time had not yet come. That time was not set by His enemies but by His Father.

8:21 They had asked the location of His Father, and John mentions also His presence in the temple. (See 8:59.) Before them was the One they yearned to capture. In this context Jesus repeats that they will look for Him and not find Him. Where He will be, they cannot follow (7:33,34). No one seized Him; in God’s plan it was not yet His chosen time; from their perspective, it was not the right opportunity. Later He promised His disciples that they would be with Him where He would be (14:3), and He prayed for that to be fulfilled (17:24).

The conversation turns from their frustration in locating Him so they could do Him harm. Christ spoke of the harm not knowing Him would bring them. It would be eternal loss for them, never able to be with Him. By

maintaining their sin (singular) of unbelief, they would lose the right to the Presence of God. That Presence is the same thing as being with Christ.

8:22 As often reported in this Gospel, they did not understand. In 7:35 the Jews thought He would leave the area to teach Greeks elsewhere. When Jesus repeated the warning of being cut off from Him, they thought He might kill Himself and in that way make it impossible for them to find Him. The irony is that they would kill Him and so they would never see Him again (but note Matthew 26:64). No unbeliever ever saw Jesus after His resurrection. His humiliation ended at His death and burial. No unbeliever could be with Him where He was, even while He was still on earth. It is ironic that He did not kill Himself but that He would give Himself to be killed in a sacrifice, not a suicide. Here is another example of how dull of spiritual insight supposed experts are when they do not know the Lord.

8:23, 24 What the Jews had challenged in v.13 was Jesus' assertion that He is the Light of the World and that following Him was essential to not walking in darkness. This they disputed. Jesus, as He often did, had based His claim on the fact that He was from above; He was sent from above, and He had truth directly from God above, including all He said about Himself. The religious leaders were of this world and made crucial judgments as mere men, apart from any light from God. This resistance to Jesus' claims was a rejection of truth and of the way of their salvation. Apart from Jesus they would die in their sins (plural) and lose everything. All they would then have from God would be judgment for their many transgressions. The Lord was not urging on them some vague sense of relationship, but that they must believe the truth about Him. This truth Jesus had expressed in propositions. He said they must believe "*that I am*". He had already made a few "I am" statements (with more to come in this Gospel). No one can have faith in a Jesus without truth about Him. To reject the truth of Jesus is to reject the person of Jesus. He made clear that all He conveyed was from the Father. Man cannot divide the gospel package, accepting and rejecting its parts, and still have Christ as Savior. By believing we pass from death to life (5:24). Here Jesus said that not believing makes dying in sin their hopeless destiny.

8:25-27 Their question, "Who are You?" had been answered by the Lord many times. (See also 10:24.) The most recent answer was that He was the Light of the World (v.12), Who stands with the Father (v.16), One from above, not of this world (v.23). The situation was not that He had been unclear on Who He was, but that they had been rejecting every claim made by Him and all evidence supporting His words. Therefore, He had much to say in judgment of them. This too was not new; He had said that they would die in their sin and in theirs sins, because they would not believe that "I am". Instead of saying again that they do not believe Him, He stated that God is true, and all He had been saying had God as its source. To reject God makes judgment certain.

The questions to Jesus illustrate a problem besetting those who reject truth. They have great difficulty arriving at any coherent alternative to it, because there is no alternative to truth. They did not understand that Christ was speaking of His Father, because the error that captivated them produced misunderstanding.

8:28 Note what Jesus knew: a) that He would die; b) that His death would be by being *lifted up*, i.e., by crucifixion; and c) that *they* would do it. Peter likewise identified his own people as the primary crucifiers with the help of the Romans (Acts 2:23; 4:10; 10:39). They wanted to know who He was, yet they rejected His answers, so Jesus pointed to a future event that would make more clear the truth of His numerous replies to them. Using His preferred label for Himself, *the Son of Man*, Jesus meant that the reality of that would come forcefully when they crucified Him. They could have Him killed, but they could not keep Him in the grave, even with a Roman guard at the tomb (Matthew 27:62-66). After His ascension, His apostles acting in His Name performed miracles just as He had. The leaders of Israel wanted to be rid of Christ, but He continued, and continues to this day, to act as He wishes, with all authority given to Him (Matthew 28:18). Later, "*a large number of priests became obedient to the faith,*" (Acts 6:7)

Twice the NIV renders Jesus' "*I am*" as "*I am the one I claim to be*", (vv.24,28). In my opinion this addition weakens what the Lord was actually saying. *I am*, without qualification, is a way Jesus identified Himself as the Lord God of Israel. The NIV leaves it as it is in Greek in v.58. (See the notes at v.58.)

The Lord's identity would be made clear about six months later in events at Passover. Since He is Who He is, He is in union with and subject to His Father. He elaborated:

- He did not act on His own;
- He had been sent by the Father; the Father was with Him in all that He did (10:37,38), including all that He said (words very similar to 12:49,50);
- He acted to please the Father at all times, and thus in all things.

After an answer like that, they should never say He had not been forthcoming in responding to their questions about who He was. However, a few weeks later they will ask if He is the Christ, demanding a plain answer. To that the Lord replied, *"I did tell you and you do not believe"* (10:24,25). Christ did not make rare claims, supported by scant evidence, with weak miracles difficult to verify, performed far off in obscure places witnessed only by sympathizers. His activity was known by many (Acts 10:37,38; 26:25,26), and His miracles were utterly undeniable (11:45-47).

8:30,31 That many believed is a fact clearly reported in 8:30,31. This has been rather difficult for some to explain because of what Jesus said about these "believers" following v.31. (Some even wonder if there has been a corruption of the text. The Greek texts have no evidence of an alternate reading.) Yet something made John report that many believed.

A response to Christ that was both positive and inadequate shows up repeatedly. (See below Appendix 8A The Popularity of Jesus.) This is often the case. Many unbelievers today would be incensed to hear Jesus' Name used in cursing or to hear denials of His virgin birth, resurrection, or miracles. However, true saving faith in Christ is beyond mere agreement or sentimentalism.

8:32 Here the Lord *defines* a disciple. If one holds to His teaching in obedience, he is a disciple. If one professes to have Jesus as Lord while refusing to obey His teaching, such a person is not a disciple. Christ will not allow a contradiction to His role as Lord to co-exist with a life of sin. There is a tight bond between justification and sanctification. (See below Appendix 8B Justification and Sanctification.) The Lord defined discipleship because some were believers who restricted their obedience to what suited them. Jesus was clarifying who are genuine. The ones who were false believers asserted truth about Christ. Thus in some sense they "believed". Multitudes today believe in God. Many wish to know truth while resisting the allegiance the truth requires. If we really believe, we will not pick and choose what truth we will obey. If we will not obey, we do not believe.

"The truth shall set you free" is a popular motto. Jesus was not arguing for a free press. The truth Jesus spoke of was His teaching about Himself as the One sent from God. Only this truth (8:23,24) sets men free, whether they live in slavery to other men or not. To have great political and intellectual freedom and to die without Christ is to remain in bondage to Satan's deception. We must pay attention to what the Lord was really saying in those words. A man who hates his neighbor is in sin and is not free even if he may read or say whatever he wishes.

The Lord presented two alternatives: being a disciple or being a slave to sin. There is no middle ground. In Matthew 7:24-27 there were two responses to God's word. If truth is adhered to, which is far more than making some concession to it, that "holding" or "keeping" or "abiding" is evidence that one has been born from above. A valid profession of faith involves, as in the case of Father Abraham, that we would do the kind of things Abraham did. If we are like Abraham, faith will be accompanied by obedience, showing that the faith is genuine. Abraham's interest was in Christ as he looked forward so keenly to the day of His coming. What we are interested in is an important indicator of spiritual reality. A disciple hears the word of God and obeys it.

8:33 He did not say directly that they were slaves, but they knew He meant that because they rejected His explanation of what it means to be a disciple. They could see that "The truth shall set you free" meant that they were slaves. If someone says to another, "You need to wash your face," he need not say, "Your face is dirty;" the

implication is clear. Those arguing with Jesus protested that they were privileged children of Abraham. (In Galatians 3:28,29 Paul included as sons of Abraham all Jews and Gentiles in Christ). In John 9:28,29, they professed to be disciples of Moses. Professing to honor a godly heritage does not make one part of it. In v.40 the Lord showed how unlike Abraham they were. In 5:46,47, they had rejected the words of Moses. A false profession makes a deceived soul sure of needing nothing more than he is or has already. Before he believed, and while killing those who did, Paul said that he was “zealous for God” (Acts 22:3), yet at that time, he did not know the truth that later would set him free. He was persecuting the Lord he thought he was serving.

The Jews did not mean they had never been slaves in Egypt or Babylon. In John 8 they were simply claiming faithfulness as found in Psalm 119:30-32. They were proud that they were not promiscuous idolaters like the Gentiles. So they challenged Jesus to explain what kind of freedom He had in mind.

8:34-36 Whoever does not adhere to Jesus’ teaching and whoever commits sin is a slave to sin. Freedom from this slavery comes only if Christ, the Son of God, sets one free. The slave, like Ishmael, has no permanent place in the family with the rank of Isaac (Genesis 21). Jesus’ warning implied that those born in the line of Isaac were spiritually in the line of Ishmael (Note Galatians 4:24,25).

8:37 They were the seed of Abraham by birth and thus the people of God by covenantal privilege. They were circumcised members of the covenant God made with Abraham, yet they did not demonstrate sonship to Abraham, or that Abraham’s God was truly their God. If a son has no resemblance to a man thought to be his father, this raises the question who the real father might be! The reason they, unlike Abraham, were slaves to the sin of murder was that Jesus’ word had no place in their hearts. (See Appendix 8C below, Jesus’ Description of Depravity) There was nothing to deliver them from their desire to act so contrary to Father Abraham (v.40). When there is no room for the truth*, professions of faith are false. This explains how these who “believed” in Jesus were at heart His killers. (*Jesus varied His words by saying “the truth” or “My word” in vv.31-52, and once “the words of God” in v.47. These terms mean the same thing.)

8:38 To reiterate the authority of what the Jews were rejecting, Jesus again clarified its origin. Christ did not speak visions He invented but things seen in heaven from God the Father and authorized for publication on earth. Their source for their desires was their father, not identified as the devil till v.44. Christ spoke from His Father and they followed theirs. Likeness reveals paternity.

8:39-41 They repeat that Abraham is their father (v.33). The Lord replied that what they would like to do showed who their real father was. Abraham never tried to kill the Son of God, nor reject God’s word. His character was different; Abraham believed God’s word (Genesis 15:6). They claim God as their father while desiring to kill the Son of God. Hypocrites make lofty claims. Their parents were married when they were born so they thought they must be godly people. Here is the pride of law-keeping. They may have been hinting as well at their knowledge that Joseph was not the real father of Jesus.

8:42 Having God as their Father would result in loving God. This shows again that the Bible has no room for a middle category of a *carnal Christian* who disobeys God but still has God as his Father.(See Appendix 10C: The Carnal Christian). Since they do not love him, their claim is false. The Godward connection of Jesus is essential to this discussion: no one can love God and reject His ambassador. They loved neither the One God sent, nor the Sender.

8:43 The breakdown in communications was due to their spiritual dullness. They could not accept His message (Matthew 13:9). See Appendix 8C: Jesus’ Description of Depravity.

8:44 Jesus had mentioned their father (vv. 38,41). Here that father is identified as the devil. The devil must be their father because they were so much like him, including carrying out his program against Christ. (It is difficult to keep in mind that Jesus was speaking to people who “believed” in Him but served Satan.)

Two characteristics of the devil are emphasized: deceit and murder. These are closely related. By lying, Satan led our first parents away from the truth, warning, promise, and character of God. In so doing he brought them into death. Deceit was essential to his goal. Their desire to kill Jesus identified those Jews as children of the devil. The other Satanic feature was found in them as well: neither he (v.44) nor they (v.37) had any room for the truth. Satan sinned according to his sinful nature, a nature man has come to share. The devil is the father of lies and liars. The truth of Who Jesus was and where He was from was truth they rejected in favor of a lie, thus they would die in their sins and be denied eternal life (v.24). Freedom from slavery depended upon accepting what Jesus told them, but they rejected Christ as Liberator and remained in a slavery so great it even hid from them that they were slaves. Whatever observation of Christ had impressed them, their spurious faith did not bring them into truth or life. They were exposed to both the Word of God and the deceit of Satan, and they sided with their father the devil.

8:45-47 Some discussion of vv.45 & 47 appears in Appendix 8C: Jesus' Description of Depravity.

As I study this chapter, I must express some surprise at v.46. Why would Jesus even continue to talk with them? His next words provided yet another reason why they should take Him seriously. (Surely here is the patience of God.) This new feature He shows of Himself should make them more serious in considering Him. The devil is noted for deceit; now by a great contrast Jesus puts *His* character before them. Though often charged with sin, could anyone show that He had sinned? If this was impossible to discover in His case, should that not make them take Him more seriously? One of the easiest ways to sin is with our words. James the brother of Jesus said years later, *"For we all stumble in many ways, and if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body,"* (James 3:2). I wonder if James had these words of Jesus (v.46) in mind when he wrote James 3:2. There was no deceit for anyone to catch, nothing devilish in Him. Truth characterized Him and made Him unique among all teachers on earth; should they not take such a man seriously? He spoke the words of God, but only those who belonged to God would hear Him. They recognized His word for what it was. (Note 1Thessalonians 2:13.)

8:48 This again is more insult. (See Psalm 31:18.) The contempt those Jews had for Samaritans violated Leviticus 19:17,18. They spoke of Jesus as a Samaritan, possibly because His challenge to them was that they were not true children of Abraham, something they thought a Samaritan might say of Jews. He had referred to them as children of the devil, so their "demon" remark was possibly retaliation for Jesus saying that. They felt that if Jesus could be so wrong about them, His thoughts must be inspired by Satan.

8:49-51 The Lord did not dismiss the word about a demon. He knew that they knew He was a Jew. He did not reply (at least in the brief account John has written for us) to the slur that He was a Samaritan. (It is not a sin to be a Samaritan!) One cannot have demon-inspired intentions while honoring God. Since Jesus had a single and pure motive in all His ministry, this shows He was not demonic. There are many accounts of genuine demonic possession and activity in the Synoptic Gospels. Nothing in Jesus' activity or teaching fits in with that. Children of the devil do not attempt to be fair. In Matthew 12:24-32 the Lord gave a major reply to the charge that He was the devil's agent. Here in John 8, Jesus gave a different one. Demon possession could not explain His teaching and the large impact it was having on Jerusalem. Then what would? It was that Jesus did not seek glory for Himself or function in His own Name (5:41-44). Honoring His Father was His mission by word and deed.

That Jesus sought the glory of God was a claim that would remain in their memory. That God the Judge would seek His glory would be observed later in the resurrection. The Father was determined to glorify His obedient Son. Ordinarily the New Testament refers to the resurrection as the act of the Father (Acts 2:32; 4:10; 5:30). Only months away, in the following spring, it would happen, and people could see that the ministry of Christ was not generated by demons. The Resurrection is still God's testimony to Jesus (Matthew 12:39,40), the only Man in all of history Who deserved a resurrection!

It appears to me that the matter of God honoring Christ was presented in this text parallel to the way God treats the one keeping His Word. Not only would Jesus not see death as the final word, neither would anyone who

believes in Him. The Father will honor anyone who honors Christ (12:26). Eternal life is the gift for the one who keeps Jesus' word. The Christian will never see death in the sense of 11:25,26. (Note how the Lord maintained His ministry of evangelism in the face of hostility.)

8:52,53 When the Jews heard about never dying, and that Jesus asserted that anyone agreeing with and holding His teaching would not die, they were sure He was more than wrong. In their minds, His claims were preposterous. They grew more convinced that He must have a demon. When He said He was the Son of God, the religious leaders were certain He was blaspheming. To make such a claim is blasphemous with one exception; it is not blasphemous for God to speak this way! The One through Whom all things were made (1:3) was speaking to them. The Possessor of all life (1:3) said "I am the Bread of life" (6:35). They did not test their doubts by Scripture (5:39). There they would learn of a divine Messiah, Who would minister in Galilee, and much more! So they repeated their charge of demon possession, offering additional evidence. Abraham was dead, so if keep Jesus' word is the key to remaining alive, old Abraham enjoyed no such benefit. He was not one of Jesus' disciples! Surely, if all Jesus said was true, a man like Abraham would still be here! To this they added the prophets; they were God's prophets, but they too were dead. They confidently asked Who this Jesus must be to make such a preposterous claim as to say that all who keep His word will never die?

John does not report any discussion of what Jesus meant by not seeing death. His word had been dismissed. His claims were rejected, and an explanation for them had been thrown into His face. Then they asked Who He made Himself out to be. They were insulting God.

8:54 To make an exalted claim about oneself is deceitful and self-centered. Christ did not seek glory by false appraisals of Himself. To glorify Himself would prove Him a vain man. Jesus, though worthy of the worship of all creation, left all glorification of Himself to His Father.

These Jews had claimed Abraham as their father and God as their Father. They had a right by birth to Abraham and by covenant with God to make such a claim. God had promised to be Abraham's God and the God of Abraham's offspring (Genesis 17:7). Jesus in v.54 referred to their claim that He was their God. They could not have God as their God if they reject God, and that is what they were doing when they repudiated Christ. These Jews who once had the true God as their God were breaking covenant and making themselves to be "not His people" (Hosea 1:9).

8:55 It was impossible for Jesus to speak in any other way. He did know the Father; He could not deny it, and He had been sent by Him. He could not have peace with them by denying this truth. To speak differently would be to lie and be like them. The people who could say, "He is our God" did not know Him! It was the situation in Isaiah 1:2-4 again. With Christ it was different; He knew God in a way and to an extent no creature ever will (Matthew 11:25-27). Christ also lived obediently. He held to His Father's word. We have here in 8:55, an amazing example of the Lord God obeying the Lord God Who sent Him! The Head of Christ is the Father (1Corinthians 11:3). The Lord was speaking of His perpetual knowledge of and obedience to the Father.

8:56,57 They initiated the mention of Abraham in vv. 33,39,52, & 53, so the Lord also spoke of him. They thought of Abraham as dead. In Matthew 22:32, Jesus said Abraham's God "*is not the God of the dead, but of the living,*" even though Abraham had experienced physical death (but not broken communion with the Lord). Here the Lord speaks of Abraham's days on earth many centuries before. Back then, Abraham rejoiced in the time when Christ would come. He knew of it and looked forward to it. He even knew that someday he too would walk on this earth with Christ. God had not promised him a land for a possession that He would *never* see, but one Abraham would *later* see! (Hebrews 11:13-16; 39,40) If the future appearance of Christ on earth made Abraham so glad, true children of Abraham ought to share their father's rejoicing when it happened! Jesus had said that Abraham saw His day, but they wondered if He might be saying that He had seen Abraham's. He was too young to have been here in Abraham's time, which makes perfect sense *unless* Christ also lived earlier than John the Baptist (1:15). They asked if He had seen Abraham. We know the answer is that He had and for all of Abraham's life.

8:58,59 The answer the Lord Jesus gave has a number of elements, some of which are implied:

- a) Yes, He had seen Abraham;
- b) Yes, He was more than fifty years old;
- c) He had a previous existence;
- d) what He was about to affirm of Himself was so crucial, He would introduce it with His method of making the greatest emphasis; it was another “truly, truly” statement;
- e) “*before Abraham was, I am.*”

Translating “I am” In the ESV vv. 24 & 28 both read “I am he” though in Greek there is no “he”. In the NIV, the translators put “I am the one I claim to be” in both verses, though the words “the one I claim to be” are not in the Greek text. Both translations seek to make the English smoother. In both translations I am disappointed. In vv. 24,28, the Apostle John was building attention by this unusual wording to who Christ is. Plus, John knew well that he would soon be quoting Jesus’ more famous words, “Before Abraham was, I am.” Thankfully neither the ESV nor NIV added any words in v.58 to the “I am”. The ESV says “Before Abraham was, I am,” and the NIV, “Before Abraham was born, I am.”

“I am” was a way the Lord referred to Himself in a number of places in Isaiah; see Isaiah 43:10-13 for examples. Probably the most striking use of *I am* appears as the Name God used for Himself in Exodus 3:14, “I AM WHO I AM” (which is the precise wording *and* lettering of both the NIV and ESV). The Jews knew that Jesus had applied the divine Name to Himself. Their reaction in v.59 shows that they were certain He had done so. It is right that the Lord should take His own Name. When Jesus did this, either He was guilty of a gross and wicked blasphemy, or He was the Lord in human flesh saying in very clear language Who He was. (Note the odd request of Christ in 10:24!)

The Deity of Christ in the Gospel of John The Apostle John called Jesus *God* (1:1, 18), and presented Him as the Creator (1:3). In 1:14 he implied that in Christ the glory of God was again visible on earth. As begotten of the Father, He is what the Father is. John agreed with the Jewish conclusion that Christ intended to be understood as equal to God in 5:18. Then later in chapter 5, Jesus openly claimed all the prerogatives of God in knowledge, resurrection, salvation and judgment. The proper honor for Christ is the kind reserved for God (5:23). When Jesus said *I am*, the Apostle John wrote in Greek quoting the Lord, using the precise pronoun and verb (with no predicate) that combine to form the Name of God in Exodus 3:14. No clearer words existed for Jesus to say Who He was than what He used in 8:58. All the I-am-something statements that John reports (I am the Bread of Life, etc.) should be read knowing that Jesus had deliberately used the Divine Name in 8:58. So He is the Bread of Life, and all the other things as well, because He is the Lord Himself.

We ought to retain the significance of the Lord repeatedly referring to Himself as *the Son of Man*. This term made abundantly clear that He was human, for the son of any man must be human, but the title *Son of Man* in Daniel 7:13,14 belongs to a Person properly worshipped, and Who must therefore be God! In John 12:41 the apostle testified that when Isaiah saw the Lord in Isaiah 6, He was seeing the glory of Christ. This Gospel excels in presenting Christ as the Lord God Himself. All other views are unworthy of Christ Who is God the Son.

8:59 The law of God required stoning for blasphemy (Leviticus 24:16). Reaching for stones shows both their passionate rejection of the truth that Christ was their Lord, and their murderous hatred of Him. It also shows that they understood well what He was saying. Since in their opinion He was not God, His sin was blasphemy with the proper penalty being stoning. Under this kind of duress, the Lord left the temple, where He had been during the narrative of 7:14 – 8:59. God was rejected in it, and a generation later, the Lord would have Gentiles tear it down, while He built another temple composed of those who believe that Jesus is the *I am*. These living stones (1 Peter 2:4-8) would form a spiritual house built on the foundation where Jesus Christ is the cornerstone. Israel would stumble over that stone (Isaiah 8:13-15). In John 8 the Jews chose to stumble.

Appendix 8A The Popularity of Jesus

In many instances Jesus enthralled His observers for a variety of reasons. The first example in Scripture was the effect on those in the temple who heard His questions and answers when He was twelve years old. They were amazed (Luke 2:46,47). Later when He was an adult teacher, His most bitter opponents marveled at His learning though they could not account for his knowledge (7:15). When experts tried to catch Him in His words, they were the ones to lose the argument (Matthew 22:22). The guards sent to arrest Him, did not dare to do so because of His profound ability in public teaching. His teaching influenced some hearers to conclude that He must be the Prophet or the Christ (7:40,41). Matthew 7:28,29 reports that people were astonished at the authoritative quality of His teaching. In Nazareth, His home village, His neighbors were amazed at His teaching (Mark 6:1,2). Luke mentions *amazement* three times in Luke 4:22-36. Note that all this, so far, was related to His speaking, apart from the wonder and fame caused by His miracles. The Lord interacted from Scripture with their regular appointed teachers. The common people were delighted at what He said, while the professionals were sometimes embarrassed. He warned about the hypocrisy of prominent religious men (Mark 12:35-40). To many of the common people, Jesus was more convincing than the established teachers. Since the religious leaders could not refute Him, and could not silence Him, they saw only one recourse, and that was to kill Him.

Probably it was Jesus' miracles that caused the greatest attention and thus a kind of "faith" in Him (2:23), probably limited to positive opinions of Him. When a crowd of disciples at his Triumphal Entry joyfully praised God, it was because of His miracles (Luke 19:37). This does not mean they had a faith that produced the kind of fruit Jesus insisted on in 8:31-36. Some faith, as in Matthew 13:20,21, is little more than temporary excitement. Jesus made a huge impression on many people, as seen in Luke 5:26, "*Everyone was amazed and gave praise to God. They were filled with awe and said, 'We have seen remarkable things today.'*" Luke and Matthew especially report that His fame spread far and wide. Matthew 4:24 is only one of many examples. The miracles were of different kinds. When Jesus cast out demons, this too revealed the greatness of God (Luke 9:42,43). Miracles gained the attention of many, such as Nicodemus (3:2), convincing him that Jesus was from God. That kind of faith can occur without one being born of the Spirit.

I conclude that some "believed" because Jesus was persuasive, holding His listeners' attention, and confounding those who tried to catch Him in an error. It was obvious that the young rabbi was much more clever than the seasoned teachers. He seemed to be winning the public debates. The common people observed this and were impressed. They knew of His great miracles. They could also see Him courageously appear in public when it was known that the authorities intended to kill Him (7:25,26). Often people were divided in their opinions. To many who were saying confidently that He was in some way connected to God, Jesus had some strong words with an emphasis on obedience about what a real disciple is. So many opinions of Jesus have been reported in this Gospel already that the faith of those mentioned in v.31 is vague. It is enough to accept that in some unclear and inadequate way, they believed, or they thought they did.

Appendix 8B Justification and Sanctification

Questions from the Westminster Larger Catechism

Question 70: What is justification?

Answer: Justification is an act of God's free grace unto sinners, in which he pardons all their sins, accepts and accounts their persons righteous in his sight; not for any thing wrought in them, or done by them, but only for the perfect obedience and full satisfaction of Christ, by God imputed to them, and received by faith alone.

Question 71: How is justification an act of God's free grace?

Answer: Although Christ, by his obedience and death, did make a proper, real, and full satisfaction to God's justice in the behalf of them that are justified; yet inasmuch as God accepts the satisfaction from a surety, which he might have demanded of them, and did provide this surety, his own only Son, imputing his righteousness to

them, and requiring nothing of them for their justification but faith, which also is his gift, their justification is to them of free grace.

Question 72: What is justifying faith?

Answer: Justifying faith is a saving grace, wrought in the heart of a sinner by the Spirit and Word of God, whereby he, being convinced of his sin and misery, and of the disability in himself and all other creatures to recover him out of his lost condition, not only assents to the truth of the promise of the gospel, but receives and rests upon Christ and his righteousness, therein held forth, for pardon of sin, and for the accepting and accounting of his person righteous in the sight of God for salvation.

Question 73: How does faith justify a sinner in the sight of God?

Answer: Faith justifies a sinner in the sight of God, not because of those other graces which do always accompany it, or of good works that are the fruits of it, nor as if the grace of faith, or any act thereof, were imputed to him for his justification; but only as it is an instrument by which he receives and applies Christ and his righteousness.

Question 74: What is adoption?

Answer: Adoption is an act of the free grace of God, in and for his only Son Jesus Christ, whereby all those that are justified are received into the number of his children, have his name put upon them, the Spirit of his Son given to them, are under his fatherly care and dispensations, admitted to all the liberties and privileges of the sons of God, made heirs of all the promises, and fellow heirs with Christ in glory.

Question 75: What is sanctification?

Answer: Sanctification is a work of God's grace, whereby they whom God has, before the foundation of the world, chosen to be holy, are in time, through the powerful operation of his Spirit applying the death and resurrection of Christ unto them, renewed in their whole man after the image of God; having the seeds of repentance unto life, and all other saving graces, put into their hearts, and those graces so stirred up, increased, and strengthened, as that they more and more die unto sin, and rise unto newness of life.

Question 76: What is repentance unto life?

Answer: Repentance unto life is a saving grace, wrought in the heart of a sinner by the Spirit and Word of God, whereby, out of the sight and sense, not only of the danger, but also of the filthiness and odiousness of his sins, and upon the apprehension of God's mercy in Christ to such as are penitent, he so grieves for and hates his sins, as that he turns from them all to God, purposing and endeavoring constantly to walk with him in all the ways of new obedience.

Question 77: Wherein do justification and sanctification differ?

Answer: Although sanctification be inseparably joined with justification, yet they differ, in that God in justification imputes the righteousness of Christ; in sanctification his Spirit infuses grace, and enables to the exercise thereof; in the former, sin is pardoned; in the other, it is subdued: the one does equally free all believers from the revenging wrath of God, and that perfectly in this life, that they never fall into condemnation; the other is neither equal in all, nor in this life perfect in any, but growing up to perfection.

Question 78: Whence arises the imperfection of sanctification in believers?

Answer: The imperfection of sanctification in believers arises from the remnants of sin abiding in every part of them, and the perpetual lustings of the flesh against the spirit; whereby they are often foiled with temptations, and fall into many sins, are hindered in all their spiritual services, and their best works are imperfect and defiled in the sight of God.

Question 79: May not true believers, by reason of their imperfections, and the many temptations and sins they are overtaken with, fall away from the state of grace?

Answer: True believers, by reason of the unchangeable love of God, and his decree and covenant to give them perseverance, their inseparable union with Christ, his continual intercession for them, and the Spirit and seed of God abiding in them, can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace, but are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

Appendix 8C: Jesus' Description of Depravity

A variety of statements appear in John 8 from the lips of Christ relating to human depravity. John 8 is not alone in reporting that Jesus taught the depravity of man. (See Matthew **13:15**; **15:7-20**.)

A definition:

Depravity refers to human corruption. This corruption began when Adam by sinning abandoned his original state of righteousness, which was replaced by an evil nature opposite to the good condition in which he was created. Thus man's nature has become actively contrary to the rule of God. He may have a very admirable life in relation to other humans, but he will not live obedient to God, motivated by love for God and seeking God's glory above his own.

Jesus described or implied a condition in which men:

- had no room for His word (v.37).
- did not understand it (v.43).
- were unable to hear His word (v.43).
- did not believe Christ *because* what He spoke to them was the truth (v.45).
- were slaves to sin (an implication of vv.31 – 36).
- were children of the devil (v.44).
- were willfully active in fulfilling the devil's desires (v.44).

Some observations:

- Sometimes the Bible focuses on the fruit of an evil heart (Galatians 5:19-21), or the variety of sinners (1 Corinthians 6:9,10). In John 8, the Lord spoke mainly of the nature of the sinner.
- In this text, the dominant aspect of depravity is the obstinate rejection of the truth spoken by Christ. They had no place for it, no ear for it, and would not believe it. They rejected both the Person and His message. Other prominent themes in John 8 are that these hearers were slaves to sin, and that they had the nature of the devil.
- The depravity here is found in religious people, professing knowledge and allegiance to the true God. This differs from Gentile depravity in Romans 1:26-32. Depravity varies with culture.
- The persons Jesus speaks of here are not scribes and Pharisees, as we might expect. The clergy of Israel were denounced for their hypocrisy in Matthew 23 and elsewhere. The ones addressed in these verses are said to be Jews who had "believed" (8:31). The Pharisees had made it clear that they did not (7:47,48). When John reported that the Pharisees did not believe, and then he identified another group in 8:31,32 who did, we have a strong reason to conclude that Christ was speaking beyond the religious elite to a more general audience.

Theological conclusions:

The depravity described in John 8 is related to the theme of a sinner's inability to respond properly in faith and repentance to the gospel. (For this theme, see Appendix 3A The Cannot's and the New Birth.) *Inability and corruption are not the same*. It is the corruption of human nature by sin that makes a man unable to

come to Christ (6:44). Depravity is our moral condition apart from divine intervention to save. The awful truth about us is that we cannot come (6:44, inability) because we will not (8:43 corruption), and we will not because we do not want to, and we will not want to unless we are given a change of heart by God (3:3; 3:5). Our hearts are set in an anti-God mode and a pro-sin mode that affects all our motivations. This is our natural depravity. What Jesus said in John 8 is fully consistent with Paul's description of man as: dead in sin, in step with the world, dominated by Satanic power, and producing many sins (Ephesians 2:1-3).

The popular notion of "free will" involves much harmful and unnecessary confusion. Man is free to make all the decisions he wishes to make. God has not hampered man's will or locked him into a certain psychological disposition against his will. The problem is that man has corrupted himself. In the first sin, Adam destroyed his good appetite for fellowship with God; he chose sin freely and so came under its power, which dominates him within. In addition, he has come under a very dominating power without, the devil himself. Man cannot act against his own altered nature, even though allowed and urged by God to do so. The sinner cannot welcome the rule of a Lord over Him, to Whom He is in rebellion and Whom he hates. That Lord requires of man a course of righteousness unattractive to man in his sinfulness, and therefore it is unnatural for a man to seek God (Romans 3:10-18). He may do so; God is not stopping Him; but He cannot do so, for his will is part of his contaminated nature. For faith to occur, God must exercise His free will to turn the sinner's heart back to Himself. This resurrection from rebellion unto repentance (3 r's!) is *the new birth*. Without it a man can neither see, enter nor desire God's kingdom (3:3,5). The unregenerate man is free to choose cake according to his physical appetite, but he is not free to choose Christ because his spiritual appetite despises the things of God, making Christ as Lord unattractive. The vague term *free will* is misleading because a man is free to do only what he wills. He cannot and will not will any obedient response to Christ unless his will has been transformed by God to believe the gospel.

If all this sounds compatible with a **doctrine of election** by God unto salvation, it is. In the Gospel of John, salvation is not only by God in execution; salvation springs from God's decision. In 3:8, the birth from above is by **the Holy Spirit's will**; in 5:21 it is **the Son's choice**; in 6:37-39 the ones who eventually believe are **the Father's prior gift** to the Son. God had not intervened to save the ones Jesus was debating in John 8. (Much repentance occurred later, according to the Book of Acts.) Their inability to hear at that point in time had not been relieved by God taking them in as His own. "*The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God*" (v. 47). Likewise, the reason others did not believe was "*you are not part of my flock,*" (10:26). Election does not prevent the salvation of those who might otherwise decide for it. Unless there is God's election, salvation cannot occur because otherwise no man would ever want to know the Lord. No one can act contrary to his own nature, (God cannot act contrary to His nature either! Titus 1:2) The depravity Jesus described is so real only God's decision to save can remedy our deep-seated rejection. Without regeneration no one would believe, and without election not one would be regenerated. Election is God's eternal decision to bring to life and faith, all the undeserving and depraved sinners He had chosen to save.