

For Adults Ages 18 and Up

Adult Bible Class



Spring Quarter
March | April | May 2024

Adult Bible Class

SPRING QUARTER

March, April, May 2024

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Jesus Is God

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The Divisiveness of Jesus

BY MATTHEW ROBINSON

When Jesus sent out the Twelve to preach to Israel during His earthly ministry, He made a startling statement: "I came not to send peace, but a sword" (Matt. 10:34).

The gospel is a sword because it does not allow for neutrality. It makes claims that force its hearers to choose between Christ and the world. One of those claims is that Jesus of Nazareth is no less than God Himself in human flesh.

As you study the passages for this quarter, notice the division that arises in response to Jesus' claims to deity. That division comes because spiritual forces of darkness are waging war against Christ (cf. Eph. 6:12), but faith in Him always emerges as the one thing that "overcometh the world" (1 John 5:5).

In unit I we will see how Jesus' claim to divinity is confirmed by His power over death. In lesson 1 (John 8:31-38, 48-56, 58-59), Jesus teaches that there are only two options: live in slavery to sin, or live in the freedom of the Son of God. Everyone who abides in His word will have eternal life, but everyone who does not will forfeit that life. How is Jesus able to make such a promise? Because He is none other than the self-existent "I AM" who revealed Himself to Moses (John 8:58; cf. Ex. 3:14). As a result of this claim, many of the Jews who previously professed belief in Jesus reject Him, saying He has a demon.

In lesson 2 (Luke 8:40-56), Jesus comes to the house of a dead girl. When He tells the mourners that she is only sleeping, they scoff at Him. In contrast, the girl's father trusts what

Jesus says. Jesus sends the mourners out of the house, but allows the girl's parents to stay and witness His power over death.

Next we see Jesus raise His friend Lazarus from the dead (John 11:38-44; lesson 3). Lazarus's sisters at first waver in their hope, but when Jesus calls Lazarus out of the tomb, they and many of the Jews with them believe in Jesus as the Son of God. However, even at the sight of a dead man rising and walking out of a tomb, many respond in unbelief. They report the incident to the religious leaders, who plot to put both Jesus and Lazarus to death.

In lesson 4 (Luke 23:33-49), Jesus is crucified between two criminals. One of the criminals joins the Jewish leaders and Roman soldiers in mocking Him, but the other rebukes the first and asks for mercy from Jesus. In response, Jesus assures the second criminal that he will be with Him in paradise that very day.

In lesson 5 (Luke 24:1-12, 30-35) comes the ultimate vindication of Jesus' identity as the Son of God—His resurrection from the dead.

In unit II we will see how Jesus' claim to divinity is confirmed by His miracles. Jesus' first miracle (John 2:1-12; lesson 6) might seem mundane to us. After all, running out of wine at a wedding is not quite on the same level as a life-threatening illness. However, this first miracle shows us the purpose of all of Jesus' miracles: to reveal His glory as the Son of God and to bring people to faith in Him (vs. 11; cf. 1:14).

As the miracles of Jesus become

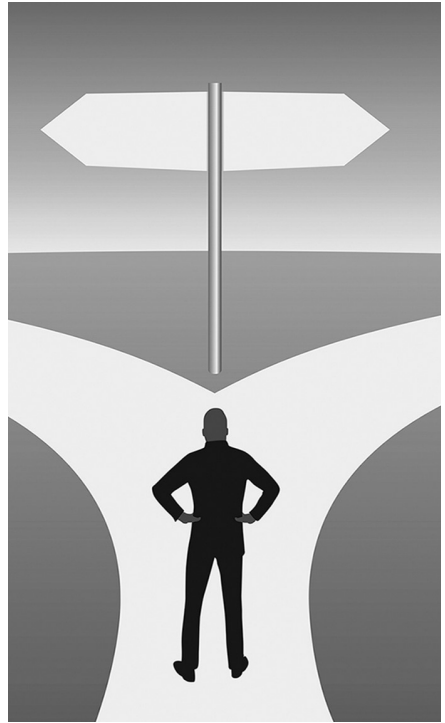
more public, the opposition to Him grows. In lesson 7 (Mark 9:14-29), the spiritual nature of that opposition becomes evident as a demon lashes out at the sight of Jesus and cries in anguish when Jesus casts it out. The battleground once again is over belief in Jesus. In the midst of a “faithless generation” (vs. 19), Jesus declares that for one who believes in Him, “all things are possible” (vs. 23), including the defeat of demonic forces.

When Jesus heals a man on the Sabbath (Luke 6:1-11; lesson 8), He draws the ire of the scribes and Pharisees. Despite Jesus’ miraculous work, these religious leaders only want to concentrate on His violation of their man-made Sabbath laws. Once again, Jesus puts His message in black-and-white terms. There are two options: to do good on the Sabbath or to do evil. The only path to the former option is to recognize Jesus as the Lord of the Sabbath. In lesson 9 (Matt. 14:22-36), Jesus amazes His disciples by walking on water and calming a storm. The struggle between faith and doubt shows up again when Peter’s confidence turns to fear, but Jesus graciously pulls him out of the stormy waters and calms the waves. His disciples fall down and worship Him as the Son of God.

When Jesus forgives the sins of a paralytic (Mark 2:1-12; lesson 10), the scribes accuse Him of blasphemy, for no one but God can forgive sins. Jesus then heals the paralytic’s physical ailment to prove His authority to forgive sins, thus silencing His opponents and prompting the people to glorify God.

Finally, in unit III, we will see how Jesus’ claim to divinity is confirmed by His exaltation at the right hand of the Father.

Despite all the opposition to Jesus, the Father vindicates Him by declaring Him to be the final revelation of God’s Word—the Son who is worshipped even by the angels (Heb. 1:1-9; lesson 11).



In lesson 12 (Rev. 5:6-14), we get a glimpse into the heavenly worship of the Son, whose redemptive sacrifice makes Him worthy to rule the whole universe and to receive the worship of all living things. In lesson 13 (Rev. 22:6-10, 12-13, 16-21), we have the promise that Jesus is “coming soon” (vss. 7, 12, 20).

As we consider these passages, we must not treat our study as merely an intellectual or apologetic exercise to prove the deity of Christ. In presenting Himself as God, Jesus has given us two choices: surrender our whole lives to Him as the Lord of the universe, or reject Him as a blasphemer. There is no middle ground. So how will you respond to Him? Are you trying to hang on to the world while believing in Christ? Do not forget that the gospel is a sword. Friendship with the world is enmity with Christ (Jas. 4:4).

SCRIPTURE LESSON TEXT

JOHN 8:31 Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, *then* are ye my disciples indeed;

32 And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

33 They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?

34 Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.

35 And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: *but* the Son abideth ever.

36 If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

37 I know that ye are Abraham's seed; but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you.

38 I speak that which I have seen with my Father: and ye do that which ye have seen with your father.

48 Then answered the Jews, and said unto him, Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil?

49 Jesus answered, I have not a devil; but I honour my Father, and ye do dishonour me.

50 And I seek not mine own glory: there is one that seeketh and judgeth.

51 Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death.

52 Then said the Jews unto him, Now we know that thou hast a devil. Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and thou sayest, If a man keep my saying, he shall never taste of death.

53 Art thou greater than our father Abraham, which is dead? and the prophets are dead: whom makest thou thyself?

54 Jesus answered, If I honour myself, my honour is nothing: it is my Father that honoureth me; of whom ye say, that he is your God:

55 Yet ye have not known him; but I know him: and if I should say, I know him not, I shall be a liar like unto you: but I know him, and keep his saying.

56 Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw *it*, and was glad.

58 Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.

59 Then took they up stones to cast at him: but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.

NOTES

Jesus' Claim to Deity

Lesson Text: John 8:31-38, 48-56, 58-59

Related Scriptures: Deuteronomy 13:6-11; Romans 6:15-23;
I John 2:1-6, 22-25; II John 1:9-11

TIME: A.D. 29

PLACE: Jerusalem

GOLDEN TEXT—"If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make ye free" (John 8:31-32).

Lesson Exposition

While we express disappointment that the truth is so seldom heard these days, dishonesty is by no means something new to our society. Only the child of God has a standard by which to measure his actions and attitudes in life.

NEEDING TRUTH—John 8:31-38

The freedom of abiding (John 8:31-33). Verse 30 says that as Jesus spoke, "many believed on him." He then addressed those believers, telling them how to live out their faith as His disciples. To be disciples, Jesus told them, they needed to abide in His word, seeking to live according to His teachings (vs. 31). The same is true today. Anyone who abides in Jesus by faith will not remain unchanged.

To continue in Jesus' word means to stay—to remain, or abide—in it. That is, a person who hears Jesus' teachings will then endeavor to live by them. Jesus' word is truth to be lived; it is not merely academic information. As someone lives by the teachings of Jesus, he will experience a spiritual freedom never known before. The inner freedom that comes from knowing Jesus Christ as personal Saviour cannot be understood

by those who have never experienced it. At least some of the Jews listening to Jesus could not comprehend what He had just said. Their response was that they had not been in bondage and thus had no need for the freedom Jesus offered. They felt that their physical descent from Abraham secured their right relationship with God.

The slavery of sin (John 8:34-36). The Jews' claim that they had never been in bondage to anyone was not accurate, for their ancestors had been slaves in Egypt and Babylon. Furthermore, at that very time, they were under the control of the Roman Empire. Since that was not the kind of slavery Jesus had in mind, He did not correct these historical inaccuracies. He was speaking of spiritual slavery rather than physical slavery.

Jesus was speaking of the kind of freedom that comes to people when sin no longer has power over them. Sin in a person's life is like a taskmaster who makes cruel demands. A person living apart from God does not have the spiritual strength to live apart from sin and is therefore a slave to it. Only Christ can set us free from that bondage.