

What Did Jesus Mean?

Digging deep into Jesus' teachings.



What Did Jesus Mean?
Who Jesus Was, in His Own Words

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John 8:12 – 20

When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

¹³ The Pharisees challenged him, "Here you are, appearing as your own witness; your testimony is not valid."

¹⁴ Jesus answered, "Even if I testify on my own behalf, my testimony is valid, for I know where I came from and where I am going. But you have no idea where I come from or where I am going. ¹⁵ You judge by human standards; I pass judgment on no one. ¹⁶ But if I do judge, my decisions are true, because I am not alone. I stand with the Father, who sent me. ¹⁷ In your own Law it is written that the testimony of two witnesses is true. ¹⁸ I am one who testifies for myself; my other witness is the Father, who sent me."

¹⁹ Then they asked him, "Where is your father?"

"You do not know me or my Father," Jesus replied. "If you knew me, you would know my Father also." ²⁰ He spoke these words while teaching in the temple courts near the place where the offerings were put. Yet no one seized him, because his hour had not yet come.

Jesus spoke things about himself that no person had ever said before or since.

"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 did Jesus mean?

Jesus is talking about spiritual darkness. Spiritual darkness means: Separation from God – no fellowship with God through Jesus

Ephesians 4:18: *They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts.*

1 John 1:5 – 6: *This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. ⁶ If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth.*

Until a person is reborn of God's Spirit, he or she lives in spiritual darkness.

Proverbs 4:19: *But the way of the wicked is like deep darkness; they do not know what makes them stumble.*

Jesus is the light of the world. He is the only light that shines in the spiritual darkness. If you don't know Jesus, you are in spiritual darkness.

John 1:4 – 5: *In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.*

One way you can know that you have been born from above is that you no longer walk in darkness. The eyes of your understanding have been opened.

Isaiah 9:2: *The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned.*

Ephesians 5:8: *For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light.*

Do you remember the darkness you walked in before you met Jesus?

“The only sure defense against self-righteousness is to cultivate a quiet state of continual penitence. A sweet but sobering memory of our past guilt and a knowledge of our present imperfections are not incompatible with the joy of the Lord; and they are of inestimable aid in resisting the enemy.” -- A. W. Tozer

Are you living as a child of light? What would that look like?

- Producing fruit of the Spirit
- Rejecting sin
- Shining your light for others to come to faith

What about people who claim to be Christians but don't live like a Christian should live?

- First, if they ever were truly born again, they are Christians. Salvation is secure and eternal:
John 10:28 – 29: *I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand.²⁹ My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand.*

How could someone be a believer and not bear any evidence of a changed life? Several reasons:

- They were never truly saved.
- They are immature Christians.
- They are Christians who struggle with a “besetting sin
- They might be a “backslidden Christian.”

Jesus told us how you can recognize a true Christian.

Matthew 7:15 – 23:

Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. ¹⁶ By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? ¹⁷ Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸ A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. ¹⁹ Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰ Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.

²¹ “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²² Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?’ ²³ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’

1 John 5:18: *We know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning, but he who was born of God protects him, and the evil one does not touch him.*

Only God knows a person's heart, but Jesus said “by their fruit” you can recognize true believers from unbelievers. However, we must be careful that we don't become self-righteous judges.

Matthew 7:1: *Do not judge, or you too will be judged.*

The Pharisees challenge Jesus because he is his own witness, and according to the law, there must be two witnesses. But Jesus says there is another witness—God the Father.

"In your own Law it is written that the testimony of two witnesses is true. ¹⁸ I am one who testifies for myself; my other witness is the Father, who sent me" (John 8:17-18).

Jesus makes clear his relationship with God the Father.

- The Father sent him.
- The Father witnesses to who Jesus is.
- He speaks on the authority of the Father.
- If you know Jesus, you also know the Father. You can't know the Father unless you know Jesus.

Your world view should be totally based on biblical truth because as believers we have the light to know truth from error. Could you articulate your world view if you were asked to do so?

Those who are not yet in the family of God are in darkness.

2 Corinthians 4:4: *In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.*

John 8:21 – 30

Dispute Over Who Jesus Is

²¹ Once more Jesus said to them, "I am going away, and you will look for me, and you will die in your sin. Where I go, you cannot come."

²² This made the Jews ask, "Will he kill himself? Is that why he says, 'Where I go, you cannot come'?"

²³ But he continued, "You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. ²⁴ I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am he, you will indeed die in your sins."

²⁵ "Who are you?" they asked.

"Just what I have been telling you from the beginning," Jesus replied. ²⁶ "I have much to say in judgment of you. But he who sent me is trustworthy, and what I have heard from him I tell the world."

²⁷ They did not understand that he was telling them about his Father. ²⁸ So Jesus said, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he and that I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me. ²⁹ The one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what pleases him." ³⁰ Even as he spoke, many believed in him.

What does Jesus tell them about who he is?

In verse 24 Jesus says that they must believe that he is "*I am*" – the "he" is added there—and again in verse 28: "*then you will know that I am.*" In the Bible, "I am" means God's eternal and self-existent nature. God revealed this name to Moses.

Exodus 3:14: *God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you.'"*

These are explosive and dangerous claims that Jesus makes about himself and God.

He spoke these words while teaching in the temple courts near the place where the offerings were put. Yet no one seized him, because his hour had not yet come (John 8:20).

What does Jesus tell the Pharisees and religious leaders about themselves?

The people you know, the family members you love, the coworkers you rub shoulders with, the neighbors next door—if they do not believe and put their trust in Jesus Christ as Savior, they will not go where Jesus is.

Notice what happened as Jesus spoke: *Even as he spoke, many believed in him (John 8:30).*

Never underestimate the power of Jesus and of his word.

John 6:46 - 60

No one has seen the Father except the one who is from God; only he has seen the Father. ⁴⁷Very truly I tell you, the one who believes has eternal life. ⁴⁸I am the bread of life. ⁴⁹Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, yet they died. ⁵⁰But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which anyone may eat and not die. ⁵¹I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.”

⁵²Then the Jews began to argue sharply among themselves, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?”

⁵³Jesus said to them, “Very truly I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. ⁵⁴Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day. ⁵⁵For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. ⁵⁶Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in them. ⁵⁷Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me. ⁵⁸This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your ancestors ate manna and died, but whoever feeds on this bread will live forever.” ⁵⁹He said this while teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum.

⁶⁰On hearing it, many of his disciples said, “This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?”

Why did many of his disciples say that this was a hard teaching—hard to accept?

The Greek word means *hard to accept*; not *hard to understand*.

For a man to claim that he could give eternal life to anyone who believed in who he was is a staggering statement. No other prophet or holy man of the Bible ever said such a thing. No other religious leader ever made such a claim.

Then Jesus uses the metaphor of bread—he is the bread of life. Bread was then—and still today—seen as the staple, the food you must have in order to live. Jesus is the living bread that brings eternal life—you “eat it” once and it gives eternal life.

This passage has confused some who think Jesus is speaking of communion, the Lord’s Table, as instituted by Jesus on the night before his crucifixion. That communion is further explained by Paul in **1 Corinthians 11:23 – 26**:

For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, ²⁴and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, “This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.” ²⁵In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.” ²⁶For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

Some think that receiving the bread and cup of the Lord’s Table is essential for salvation and guarantees salvation. That is not true. Communion is done in remembrance of what Jesus did for us. What is the significance of the Lord’s Supper/Communion to you?

Jesus offers us heavenly bread for eternal life, but we must *eat* it.

- Seeing a loaf of bread on a plate will not satisfy your hunger.
- Knowing the ingredients in the bread will not satisfy your hunger.
- Taking pictures of the bread will not satisfy your hunger.
- Telling other people about the bread will not satisfy your hunger.
- Selling the bread will not satisfy your hunger.
- Playing catch with the bread will not satisfy your hunger.

Nothing will satisfy your hunger and bring you life except actually eating the bread. He who eats this bread will live forever.

Many Disciples Desert Jesus

John 6:61 – 71:

Aware that his disciples were grumbling about this, Jesus said to them, “Does this offend you? ⁶² Then what if you see the Son of Man ascend to where he was before! ⁶³ The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you—they are full of the Spirit and life. ⁶⁴ Yet there are some of you who do not believe.” For Jesus had known from the beginning which of them did not believe and who would betray him. ⁶⁵ He went on to say, “This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled them.”

⁶⁶ From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.

⁶⁷ “You do not want to leave too, do you?” Jesus asked the Twelve.

⁶⁸ Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. ⁶⁹ We have come to believe and to know that you are the Holy One of God.”

⁷⁰ Then Jesus replied, “Have I not chosen you, the Twelve? Yet one of you is a devil!” ⁷¹ (He meant Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, who, though one of the Twelve, was later to betray him.)

Jesus was not surprised that many deserted him. In part it was Jesus' intent to speak strong words and make it clear that being his disciple was not about getting free stuff or getting rid of the Romans.

Jesus understood the offense many of his listeners took at his teaching, yet he didn't change the teaching. Jesus didn't take it back. He challenged and confronted them even more.

Jesus knew the hearts of all those who were following him, who were calling themselves disciples of Jesus. Many left him and walked with him no more. However, the twelve did not leave him.

Jesus then asked the twelve if they wanted to go away also. Peter had the correct answer:

“Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and to know that you are the Holy One of God.” (John 8:68b-69).