



LIFE ISSUES
book 2

do non-Christians really deserve eternal punishment?



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Life Issues: Book 2

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An Apparent Overstatement

One of the basic tenets of Christianity is the belief that everyone is born into this world as a sinner and as such deserves eternal punishment. Upon hearing this for the first time, most would consider this at best an overstatement. Most would agree that the Hitlers of this world deserve such, but what about the good people.

One of the most commonly raised questions about Christianity is the fate of those who have never heard of Jesus Christ. This question is often asked in the context of the innocent native living in some remote part of the world where the message of Jesus Christ has never come. The Bible addresses this issue with the following points.

Good People Are Not Necessarily Righteous People - There Are No Innocent People.

It is important to note that the way the question about the native is often phrased presumes some kind of moral innocence. However, living beyond the influences of civilization does not make one free from sin. No matter what time or culture a person lives in they still have a rebellious nature toward God. The Bible confirms this universal attitude: "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23 NAS). The above question really ought to be phrased, "What happens to the guilty native who has never heard of Jesus Christ?"

The problem comes about by confusing the common understanding of “goodness” with that of “righteousness.” A good person today is typically characterized as someone who obeys the law, is kind to others, is loving towards their family and is honest at work. While these characteristics are to be commended, they should not be equated with righteousness. In fact, Jesus considered even good people to be sinners.

In Jesus’ day some of the most highly respected people were the Pharisees, the religious leaders of Israel. These men were extremely faithful in their religious duties, sacrificial in their giving to the poor and admired by everyone. However, Jesus reserved some of his harshest words for these men: “But I warn you-unless your goodness is greater than that of the Pharisees and other Jewish leaders, you can’t get into the Kingdom of Heaven at all!” (Matthew 5:20 TLB). The problem with the Pharisees was that they were concerned only with outward appearances and not inner attitudes. Their hearts were still full of pride, envy, backbiting, etc.

If this is the case, how can anyone have hope of eternal life? If the Pharisees did not measure up to God’s standards, who can? Trusting in our own efforts to merit eternal life will get us nowhere, but we can look to the righteousness of another, namely, Jesus Christ. “For God took the sinless Christ and poured into him our sins. Then, in exchange, he poured God’s goodness into us!” (2 Corinthians 5:21 TLB). God has made a way for us to have the righteousness of Christ.

Everyone Has An Opportunity

If it is clear that the Bible teaches that even the native who has never heard of Jesus is guilty, the question becomes, “Exactly what is he guilty of?” It would be terribly unfair of God to condemn a person for not accepting a message they never had the opportunity to hear. This would be inconsistent with His character, which is always fair. God judges according to the knowledge people have, not what they do not have. The following passage of Scripture sheds some light on this issue.

“But God shows his anger from heaven against all sinful, evil men who push away the truth from them. For the truth about God is known to them instinctively; God has put this knowledge in their hearts. Since earliest times men have seen the earth and sky and all God made, and have known of his existence and great eternal power. So they will have no excuse (when they stand before God at Judgment Day). Yes, they knew about him all right, but they wouldn’t admit it or worship him or even thank him for all his daily care. And after awhile they began to think up silly ideas of what God was like and what he wanted them to do. The result was that their foolish minds became dark and confused” (Romans 1:18-21 TLB).

It is apparent from this passage that the native would be judged for his or her “ungodliness and unrighteousness,” not for rejecting a message they had never heard. In fact, God has made Himself known to all people, although many will “suppress (literally, hold down) the truth.”

Furthermore, the Bible assures us of two important points. First, God has promised that people will hear and respond from every corner of the earth. Second, those who sincerely desire to know God, yet have never heard of Jesus Christ, will be given greater understanding. The Bible tells of the example of Cornelius, a very religious man, who desired to know God. He constantly prayed that God would reveal Himself to him. Like the native in the deepest jungle, he had never heard of Jesus Christ. God answered his prayers and sent to him the Apostle Peter, who explained how to have a relationship with God through Jesus Christ. Cornelius responded and put his trust in Jesus. Commenting on the fact that every one has an opportunity, Peter said, "I see very clearly that the Jews are not God's only favorites! In every nation he has those who worship Him and do good deeds and are acceptable to Him." (Acts 10:34-35 TLB).

God Does Not Deal Only with Individuals

Perhaps more than in any other nation, Americans tend to view themselves as individuals. That is, they identify themselves individually and make decisions primarily in terms of how it affects them personally, not as a part of a larger group. But in most other cultures, this is not the case.

For example, if you ask an American what he does for a living, he will typically tell you his job title, such as Vice President of Marketing. If

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you were to ask someone from another culture the same question, they might respond by telling you the name of the company they work for, whether they were an unskilled laborer or a Vice President. Indeed, people of other cultures more often see themselves as part of a larger group. In a similar way God sees us not just as individuals, but as part of a world-wide family. The Bible tells us that all people are related through hundreds of generations to the first man, Adam. Though he was created to have close fellowship with God, Adam chose to disobey God and go his own way. The New Testament tells us that consequently “When Adam sinned, sin entered the entire human race. His sin spread death throughout all the world, so everything began to grow old and die, for all sinned” (Romans 5:12 TLB). The conclusion is that we are sinners because we are part of a race that is sinful. No matter when or where we live, we are members of a sinful race.

God Would Not Be Righteous if Sinful People Were Not Punished

The Bible clearly says that God’s holy character requires He punish sinners. The question of what happens to those who have never heard the Gospel is an important one, but the answer can only be comprehended having understood what the Bible teaches about God and the human race.

For God to allow sinful people to go unpunished would be for God to tell a lie, to violate

His perfect standard and to default His perfect character.

Thus our earlier concern about the native who has never heard is a very important and legitimate one. However, vital to understanding the Bible's reasons for its conclusions, it is essential to understand the Scripture's teaching about God and the human race.

God Is Both Loving and Just

The Bible teaches us that God is both loving and just. The Bible says in 1 John 4:16 (TLB), "We know how much God loves us because we have felt his love and because we believe him when he tells us that he loves us dearly. God is love, and anyone who lives in love is living with God and God is living in him." But to stop there would be to tell only half of the story. The Bible also tells us that God is totally just, holy and righteous. In the Old Testament (Zephaniah 3:5 TLB), we read, "But the Lord is there within the city, and he does no wrong. Day by day his justice is more evident, but no one heeds-the wicked know no shame."

Very early in the Bible, before man sinned, we read that God warned man if he sinned, he would have to be eternally punished. As the Bible states in the New Testament Book of Romans, "The wages of sin is death" (6:23). Sin is defined as "missing the mark." Thus, any attitude or action, whether it be active or passive, that misses God's target of perfection is sin.

Man is in a Predicament

As we trace human history, we learn that humans were created to have loving fellowship with God. However, the Bible teaches that man chose to sin by failing to obey and trust God. As the Bible says in Romans chapter three, “Yes, all have sinned; all fall short of God’s glorious ideal” (vs. 23 TLB).

There’s an interesting verse in the Old Testament that says, “God is not a man, that he should lie; He doesn’t change his mind like humans do. Has he ever promised, without doing what he said?” (Numbers 23:19 TLB). Based on the fact that God does what He says He will do, we have to conclude that because man has sinned, God’s perfect justice requires punishment.

We have previously discussed the two most important questions in life: How does one come to know God and how does one get into heaven? Consider the following situation. Suppose you were to die and find yourself outside the gates of heaven in the presence of God and He were to ask you why He should let you in. What answer would you give? According to the Bible the correct answer can be easily summarized in three specific statements.

The First of Three Required Statements

The first thing you would have to be able to tell God is that you believe that you are a sinner deserving eternal punishment. If you believe what the Bible teaches about God and the human race,

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it is probable that you could sincerely make this statement. If you don't agree with this statement, it would be good to pinpoint what it is about the Bible's teaching of God or the human race that you find hard to believe.

Continue reading in the Gospel of John. Again, consider the questions before your reading, looking for the answers within the text.

gospel of John

chapters 6-10

6 After this Jesus went away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, which is the Sea of Tiberias. ²And a large crowd was following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing on the sick. ³Jesus went up on the mountain, and there he sat down with his disciples. ⁴Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was at hand. ⁵Lifting up his eyes, then, and seeing that a large crowd was coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat?"

⁶He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he would do. ⁷Philip answered him, "Two hundred denarii would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little." ⁸One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, ⁹"There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are they for so many?" ¹⁰Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, about five thousand in number. ¹¹Jesus then took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated. So also the fish, as much as they wanted. ¹²And when they had eaten their fill, he told his disciples, "Gather up the leftover fragments, that nothing may be lost." ¹³So they gathered them up and filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves, left by those who had eaten. ¹⁴When the people saw the sign that he had done, they said, "This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!"

¹⁵Perceiving then that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself.

¹⁶When evening came, his disciples went

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down to the sea, ¹⁷got into a boat, and started across the sea to Capernaum. It was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them. ¹⁸The sea became rough because a strong wind was blowing. ¹⁹When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat, and they were frightened. ²⁰But he said to them, "It is I; do not be afraid." ²¹Then they were glad to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going.

²²On the next day the crowd that remained on the other side of the sea saw that there had been only one boat there, and that Jesus had not entered the boat with his disciples, but that his disciples had gone away alone. ²³Other boats from Tiberias came near the place where they had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks. ²⁴So when the crowd saw that Jesus was not there, nor his disciples, they themselves got into the boats and went to Capernaum, seeking Jesus. ²⁵When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, "Rabbi, when did you come here?"

²⁶Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. ²⁷Do not labor for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal." ²⁸Then they said to him, "What must we do, to be doing the works of God?" ²⁹Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent." ³⁰So they said to him, "Then what sign do you do, that we may see and believe you? What work do you perform?"

*1. What does
Jesus mean
when He says
He is the bread
of life? (6:35)*

³¹Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'"

³²Jesus then said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. ³³For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." ³⁴They said to him, "Sir, give us this bread always."

³⁵Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst. ³⁶But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. ³⁷All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. ³⁸For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. ³⁹And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. ⁴⁰For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day."

⁴¹So the Jews grumbled about him, because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." ⁴²They said, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does he now say, 'I have come down from heaven?'" ⁴³Jesus answered them, "Do not grumble among yourselves. ⁴⁴No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day. ⁴⁵It is written in the Prophets, 'And they will all be taught by God.' Everyone

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who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me—⁴⁶not that anyone has seen the Father except he who is from God; he has seen the Father.⁴⁷Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life.⁴⁸I am the bread of life.⁴⁹Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died.⁵⁰This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die.⁵¹I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.”

⁵²The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?”⁵³So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.⁵⁴Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.⁵⁵For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink.⁵⁶Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him.⁵⁷As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me.⁵⁸This is the bread that came down from heaven, not as the fathers ate and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever.”

⁵⁹Jesus said these things in the synagogue, as he taught at Capernaum.

⁶⁰When many of his disciples heard it, they said, “This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?”

⁶¹But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples were grumbling about this, said to them, “Do you take offense at this?”

⁶²Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? ⁶³It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is of no avail. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. ⁶⁴But there are some of you who do not believe.” (For Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe, and who it was who would betray him.) ⁶⁵ And he said, “This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father.”

⁶⁶After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him. ⁶⁷ So Jesus said to the Twelve, “Do you want to go away as well?” ⁶⁸ Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life,

⁶⁹and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God.” ⁷⁰Jesus answered them, “Did I not choose you, the Twelve? And yet one of you is a devil.” ⁷¹He spoke of Judas the son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the Twelve, was going to betray him.

7 After this Jesus went about in Galilee. He would not go about in Judea, because the Jews were seeking to kill him. ²Now the Jews’ Feast of Booths was at hand. ³So his brothers said to him, “Leave here and go to Judea, that your disciples also may see the works you are doing. ⁴For no one works in secret if he seeks to be known openly. If you do these things, show yourself to the world.” ⁵For not even his brothers believed in him. ⁶Jesus said to them, “My time has not yet come, but your time is always here. ⁷The world cannot hate you, but it hates me

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because I testify about it that its works are evil.

⁸You go up to the feast. I am not going up to this feast, for my time has not yet fully come.”⁹After saying this, he remained in Galilee.

¹⁰But after his brothers had gone up to the feast, then he also went up, not publicly but in private. ¹¹The Jews were looking for him at the feast, and saying, “Where is he?” ¹²And there was much muttering about him among the people. While some said, “He is a good man,” others said, “No, he is leading the people astray.” ¹³Yet for fear of the Jews no one spoke openly of him.

¹⁴About the middle of the feast Jesus went up into the temple and began teaching. ¹⁵The Jews therefore marveled, saying, “How is it that this man has learning, when he has never studied?” ¹⁶So Jesus answered them, “My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me. ¹⁷If anyone’s will is to do God’s will, he will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority. ¹⁸The one who speaks on his own authority seeks his own glory, but the one who seeks the glory of him who sent him is true, and in him there is no falsehood.

¹⁹Has not Moses given you the law? Yet none of you keeps the law. Why do you seek to kill me?” ²⁰The crowd answered, “You have a demon! Who is seeking to kill you?” ²¹Jesus answered them, “I did one deed, and you all marvel at it. ²²Moses gave you circumcision (not that it is from Moses, but from the fathers), and you circumcise a man on the Sabbath. ²³If on the Sabbath a man receives circumcision, so that the law of Moses may not be broken, are you angry with me because on the

2. What does Jesus mean when He keeps saying His time has not yet come? (7:8, 30)

Sabbath I made a man's whole body well? ²⁴Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment."

²⁵Some of the people of Jerusalem therefore said, "Is not this the man whom they seek to kill? ²⁶And here he is, speaking openly, and they say nothing to him! Can it be that the authorities really know that this is the Christ? ²⁷But we know where this man comes from, and when the Christ appears, no one will know where he comes from."

²⁸So Jesus proclaimed, as he taught in the temple, "You know me, and you know where I come from? But I have not come of my own accord. He who sent me is true, and him you do not know. ²⁹I know him, for I come from him, and he sent me." ³⁰So they were seeking to arrest him, but no one laid a hand on him, because his hour had not yet come. ³¹Yet many of the people believed in him. They said, "When the Christ appears, will he do more signs than this man has done?"

³²The Pharisees heard the crowd muttering these things about him, and the chief priests and Pharisees sent officers to arrest him.

³³Jesus then said, "I will be with you a little longer, and then I am going to him who sent me. ³⁴You will seek me and you will not find me. Where I am you cannot come."

³⁵The Jews said to one another, "Where does this man intend to go that we will not find him? Does he intend to go to the Dispersion among the Greeks and teach the Greeks? ³⁶What does he mean by saying, 'You will seek me and you will not find me,' and, 'Where I am you cannot come'?"

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³⁷On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. ³⁸Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'" ³⁹Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

⁴⁰When they heard these words, some of the people said, "This really is the Prophet." ⁴¹Others said, "This is the Christ." But some said, "Is the Christ to come from Galilee? ⁴²Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the offspring of David, and comes from Bethlehem, the village where David was?" ⁴³So there was a division among the people over him. ⁴⁴Some of them wanted to arrest him, but no one laid hands on him.

⁴⁵The officers then came to the chief priests and Pharisees, who said to them, "Why did you not bring him?" ⁴⁶The officers answered, "No one ever spoke like this man!" ⁴⁷The Pharisees answered them, "Have you also been deceived? ⁴⁸Have any of the authorities or the Pharisees believed in him? ⁴⁹But this crowd that does not know the law is accursed." ⁵⁰Nicodemus, who had gone to him before, and who was one of them, said to them, ⁵¹"Does our law judge a man without first giving him a hearing and learning what he does?" ⁵²They replied, "Are you from Galilee too? Search and see that no prophet arises from Galilee." ⁵³[*They went each to his own house,

8 but Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. ²Early in the morning he came again to the temple. All the people came to him, and he sat down and taught them. ³The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery, and placing her in the midst ⁴they said to him, “Teacher, this woman has been caught in the act of adultery. ⁵Now in the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. So what do you say?” ⁶This they said to test him, that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. ⁷And as they continued to ask him, he stood up and said to them, “Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her.”

⁸And once more he bent down and wrote on the ground. ⁹But when they heard it, they went away one by one, beginning with the older ones, and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him.

¹⁰Jesus stood up and said to her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?” ¹¹She said, “No one, Lord.” And Jesus said, “Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more.”]

¹²Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

¹³So the Pharisees said to him, “You are bearing witness about yourself; your testimony is not true.”

¹⁴Jesus answered, “Even if I do bear witness about myself, my testimony is true, for I know where I came from and where I am going, but you do not know where I come from or where I am going.

¹⁵You judge according to the flesh; I judge no one.

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¹⁶Yet even if I do judge, my judgment is true, for it is not I alone who judge, but I and the Father who sent me. ¹⁷In your Law it is written that the testimony of two men is true. ¹⁸I am the one who bears witness about myself, and the Father who sent me bears witness about me.” ¹⁹They said to him therefore, “Where is your Father?” Jesus answered, “You know neither me nor my Father. If you knew me, you would know my Father also.” ²⁰These words he spoke in the treasury, as he taught in the temple; but no one arrested him, because his hour had not yet come.

²¹So he said to them again, “I am going away, and you will seek me, and you will die in your sin. Where I am going, you cannot come.” ²²So the Jews said, “Will he kill himself, since he says, ‘Where I am going, you cannot come?’” ²³He said to them, “You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. ²⁴I told you that you would die in your sins, for unless you believe that I am he you will die in your sins.” ²⁵So they said to him, “Who are you?” Jesus said to them, “Just what I have been telling you from the beginning. ²⁶I have much to say about you and much to judge, but he who sent me is true, and I declare to the world what I have heard from him.”

²⁷They did not understand that he had been speaking to them about the Father. ²⁸So Jesus said to them, “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 authority, but speak just as the Father taught me. ²⁹And he who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone, for I always do

3. In Jesus' teaching, what did He say was the consequence of not believing that He was the Christ (The Messiah prophesied in the Old Testament who was to be the only payment for man's sins)? (8:24)

4. *Jesus taught that to be His disciple meant to follow His Word. What does it mean to hold to His teaching?* (8:31)

5. *What does it mean to be free?* (8:32-36)

6. *The Jews of Jesus' day certainly had a strong belief in God. Did Jesus accept such a belief as sufficient?* (8:38-47)

the things that are pleasing to him.”³⁰ As he was saying these things, many believed in him.

³¹So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples,³² and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”³³ They answered him, “We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say, ‘You will become free?’”

³⁴Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin.³⁵ The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever.³⁶ So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.³⁷ I know that you are offspring of Abraham; yet you seek to kill me because my word finds no place in you.³⁸ I speak of what I have seen with my Father, and you do what you have heard from your father.”

³⁹They answered him, “Abraham is our father.” Jesus said to them, “If you were Abraham’s children, you would be doing what Abraham did,⁴⁰ but now you seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. This is not what Abraham did.⁴¹ You are doing what your father did.” They said to him, “We were not born of sexual immorality. We have one Father—even God.”⁴² Jesus said to them, “If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and I am here. I came not of my own accord, but he sent me.⁴³ Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word.⁴⁴ You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with

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the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies. ⁴⁵But because I tell the truth, you do not believe me. ⁴⁶Which one of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me? ⁴⁷Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God.”

⁴⁸The Jews answered him, “Are we not right in saying that you are a Samaritan and have a demon?” ⁴⁹Jesus answered, “I do not have a demon, but I honor my Father, and you dishonor me. ⁵⁰Yet I do not seek my own glory; there is One who seeks it, and he is the judge.

⁵¹Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death.” ⁵²The Jews said to him, “Now we know that you have a demon! Abraham died, as did the prophets, yet you say, ‘If anyone keeps my word, he will never taste death.’

⁵³Are you greater than our father Abraham, who died? And the prophets died! Who do you make yourself out to be?” ⁵⁴Jesus answered, “If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing. It is my Father who glorifies me, of whom you say, ‘He is our God.’ ⁵⁵But you have not known him. I know him. If I were to say that I do not know him, I would be a liar like you, but I do know him and I keep his word. ⁵⁶Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad.” ⁵⁷So the Jews said to him, “You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?” ⁵⁸Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.” ⁵⁹So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple.

7. What did Jesus mean when He said, “I tell you the truth, before Abraham was born, I am!”? (8:58)

9 As he passed by, he saw a man blind from birth. ²And his disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” ³Jesus answered, “It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him. ⁴We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work.

⁵As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.” ⁶Having said these things, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva. Then he anointed the man’s eyes with the mud ⁷and said to him, “Go, wash in the pool of Siloam” (which means Sent). So he went and washed and came back seeing. ⁸The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar were saying, “Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?” ⁹Some said, “It is he.” Others said, “No, but he is like him.” He kept saying, “I am the man.” ¹⁰So they said to him, “Then how were your eyes opened?” ¹¹He answered, “The man called Jesus made mud and anointed my eyes and said to me, ‘Go to Siloam and wash.’ So I went and washed and received my sight.” ¹²They said to him, “Where is he?” He said, “I do not know.”

¹³They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. ¹⁴Now it was a Sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. ¹⁵So the Pharisees again asked him how he had received his sight. And he said to them, “He put mud on my eyes, and I washed, and I see.” ¹⁶Some of the Pharisees said, “This man is not

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from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath.” But others said, “How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?” And there was a division among them. ¹⁷So they said again to the blind man, “What do you say about him, since he has opened your eyes?” He said, “He is a prophet.”

¹⁸The Jews did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight, until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight ¹⁹and asked them, “Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?” ²⁰His parents answered, “We know that this is our son and that he was born blind. ²¹But how he now sees we do not know, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age. He will speak for himself.” ²²(His parents said these things because they feared the Jews, for the Jews had already agreed that if anyone should confess Jesus to be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue.) ²³Therefore his parents said, “He is of age; ask him.”

²⁴So for the second time they called the man who had been blind and said to him, “Give glory to God. We know that this man is a sinner.” ²⁵He answered, “Whether he is a sinner I do not know. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see.” ²⁶They said to him, “What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?” ²⁷He answered them, “I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciples?” ²⁸And they reviled him, saying, “You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. ²⁹We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from.”

³⁰The man answered, “Why, this is an amazing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. ³¹We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does his will, God listens to him. ³²Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind. ³³If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.” ³⁴They answered him, “You were born in utter sin, and would you teach us?” And they cast him out.

³⁵Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him he said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” ³⁶He answered, “And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?” ³⁷Jesus said to him, “You have seen him, and it is he who is speaking to you.” ³⁸He said, “Lord, I believe,” and he worshiped him. ³⁹Jesus said, “For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind.” ⁴⁰Some of the Pharisees near him heard these things, and said to him, “Are we also blind?” ⁴¹Jesus said to them, “If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say, ‘We see,’ your guilt remains.

10 “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber. ²But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. ³To him the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow

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him, for they know his voice. ⁵A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.” ⁶This figure of speech Jesus used with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them.

⁷So Jesus again said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. ⁸All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. ⁹I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture. ¹⁰The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.

¹¹I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. ¹²He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them.

¹³He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. ¹⁴I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, ¹⁵just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. ¹⁶And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. ¹⁷For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. ¹⁸No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father.”

¹⁹There was again a division among the Jews because of these words. ²⁰Many of them said, “He

8. What does Jesus mean when He said, “I am the door for the sheep”? (10:7)

has a demon, and is insane; why listen to him?”

²¹Others said, “These are not the words of one who is oppressed by a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?”

²²At that time the Feast of Dedication took place at Jerusalem. It was winter,²³ and Jesus was walking in the temple, in the colonnade of Solomon. ²⁴So the Jews gathered around him and said to him, “How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly.” ²⁵Jesus answered them, “I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father’s name bear witness about me,²⁶ but you do not believe because you are not part of my flock. ²⁷My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. ²⁹My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand. ³⁰I and the Father are one.”

³¹The Jews picked up stones again to stone him. ³²Jesus answered them, “I have shown you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you going to stone me?” ³³The Jews answered him, “It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you but for blasphemy, because you, being a man, make yourself God.” ³⁴Jesus answered them, “Is it not written in your Law, ‘I said, you are gods’? ³⁵If he called them gods to whom the word of God came—and Scripture cannot be broken—³⁶do you say of him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world, ‘You are blaspheming,’ because I said, ‘I am the Son of God’? ³⁷If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe

9. Why did the Jews want to kill Jesus? (10:30-33)

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me; ³⁸but if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father.”

³⁹Again they sought to arrest him, but he escaped from their hands.

⁴⁰He went away again across the Jordan to the place where John had been baptizing at first, and there he remained. ⁴¹And many came to him. And they said, “John did no sign, but everything that John said about this man was true.” ⁴²And many believed in him there.



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