

True Son

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[0 : 00] And it claimed that the man initially accused his wife of infidelity, but then when the paternity test revealed that this was truly his children, his wife then confessed that she had had a complete plastic makeover worth about \$100,000, which was the result of, which is what resulted supposedly in these children.

And the story was circulated along with this picture of two, I mean, really beautiful couple, and then three admittedly not so pretty children. It was circulated, but it turns out the story was an urban legend, and the picture was not of a real family.

Rather, the two parents were actually models, which is why they were so good-looking, and the children were Photoshopped to look suspiciously ugly. And it was actually originally an advertisement of a Taiwanese plastic surgery center, complete with the tagline, the only thing you'll ever have to worry about is having to explain it to the kids.

So this appalling story, it's funny now that we know that it's fictional, but it teaches us not only an important lesson about checking your sources, whether you're a news agency that covered it or people who are reading it, but even more, it illustrates the principle of paternity.

This story was plausible to us because we know instinctively, we know from experience that children are supposed to resemble their parents. They're supposed to look like their parents. They're supposed to act like their parents.

[1 : 22] And in this passage, we find the Jewish leaders and Jesus debating about the true paternity of the Son, and saying, who is truly the Son of God?

And the question is of the utmost importance, because it is only the true Son of God who can reveal God the Father to us. And Jesus demonstrates convincingly in this passage that He is the true Son of God who liberates those enslaved to sin and death.

That's the main point of this passage. And He proves this with four things. At first, He bears the Father's witness. Second, He speaks the Father's words.

Three, Jesus does the Father's works. And finally, He shares the Father's oneness. So in these four proofs, Jesus demonstrates that He's the true Son of God who liberates those enslaved to sin and death.

The Father's witness, Father's words, Father's works, and the Father's oneness. And the first proof is that Jesus bears the Father's witness. And Jesus makes this incredible claim in verse 12, I am the light of the world.

[2 : 31] Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life. And we know from chapter 7 that this setting is during the Feast of the Tabernacle, or the Feast of Booths.

And during the celebration of the Jews, they had an elaborate ceremony involving water and light. And the light part, they lit four huge lamps in the temple courts, and people danced and sang through the night while holding torches in their hands.

And the witnesses, ancient witnesses of this festival wrote that you could see the light emanating from the temple precinct to all of Jerusalem during the Feast of Tabernacles.

And this would go on for days. And moreover, Zechariah 14, 5-7, prophesied, and this passage was actually a part of the liturgy, the passage that they read during this feast.

And it prophesied that there will be on the last day no more day or night because the light of God will shine. And so in light of this loaded context, Jesus says, I am the light of the world.

[3 : 38] So it's an audacious claim to say the least. And so the Pharisees confront him in verse 13. You are bearing witness about yourself. Your testimony is not true. And they're referring to what Jesus himself said earlier in chapter 5, where he said, If I alone bear witness about myself, my testimony is not true.

There is another who bears witness about me, and I know that the testimony that he bears about me is true. So they're kind of quoting Jesus' words back to him, saying, You're bearing witness about yourself, so this can't be true.

And what they're saying, in essence, is, I mean, you could make up whatever you want about yourself, right? You could invent stories. I mean, so it's not really verifiable if you say it for yourself, but if someone else corroborates it, then there's some weight.

It could hold water. That's what they're saying. And that's why we need, when we apply for jobs or colleges, references to go along with resumes that we submit. And so there is something futile about praising oneself, bearing witness to oneself.

So the Pharisees jump on that, and they say to Jesus, you're bearing witness about yourself, and so it's not true. And Jesus answers them in verses 14 to 15.

[4 : 48] Follow along with me. Even if I do bear witness about myself, my testimony is true, for I know where I came from and where I'm going.

But you do not know where I come from or where I am going. You judge according to the flesh. I judge no one. So Jesus is not playing by their rules here.

So he says, in effect, So what? What if I am bearing witness about myself? The fact that you cannot verify what I said doesn't mean that it's not true, because in fact it is true, Jesus says.

And he says, the reason he gives for this is, So this is not unlike, you know, in court when a witness is being cross-examined, and the lawyer questions the witness saying, well, how do you know that happened?

What do you know about this? How can you say that? And the witness simply responds, well, I was there. I mean, I was there. I saw it with my eyes. And Jesus is, in fact, saying, I was there. I was with the Father in heaven, and now I'm going back to him soon, to the glory and dominion I had before I came.

[5 : 57] But you, on the other hand, haven't a clue about the heavenly realities of which I speak. So therefore, I can bear witness about myself, says Jesus. And he continues, You judge according to the flesh.

I judge no one. Judging according to the flesh means that they were, had the limitations incumbent on all human beings. Their knowledge is finite.

Their character is flawed. Therefore, their judgment also is fallible. But Jesus says he doesn't judge like that. He judges accurately. And it's not saying here that he doesn't judge at all, because he does judge.

But he's saying that he's not judging in an ultimate, final sense at this time. Because as he said in chapter 3, 17, God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

Jesus will come again to judge the world, but this time around, he has yet come to save the world. And so he says, You judge according to the flesh.

[7 : 00] I judge no one. But Jesus doesn't stop there. He tells them that even by their own standards, Jesus is not bearing witness to himself alone.

He does have someone that's corroborating his witness. He says in verse 16, Yet even if I do judge, my judgment is true, for it is not I alone who judge, but I am the Father who sent me.

And he continues, In your law it is written that the testimony of two people is true. I am the one who bears witness about myself, and the Father who sent me bears witness about me.

Now, the Father bore witness to Jesus at his baptism when he spoke and said, This is my beloved son with whom I am well pleased. The Father also continually bears witness to his son with his presence.

It says in verse 29, And he who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone. The Father is with the Son at all times. But the Jews who are arguing with Jesus is not satisfied with that answer.

[8 : 04] Because they don't see the Father with their own eyes. And so they ask him in verse 19, Where is your Father? And Jesus answers, You know neither me nor my Father.

If you knew me, you would know my Father also. The reason Jesus gives for why the Jewish leaders don't recognize his Father is because they don't know him.

And Jesus is saying, in fact, that his family resemblance is so obvious, so plain, that he resembles the Father, God his Father, that the fact that these Jews don't recognize him is a sure evidence that they do not even know the Father.

Which is, of course, very offensive to the Jews. And so they say in verse 20, they wanted to arrest him, but they could not. Because his hour had not yet come. So this is the first proof.

Jesus bears the Father's witness. And the second proof Jesus offers for his true sonship is that he speaks the Father's words. In verse 26, 26, 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.

[9 : 24] We know that he is the true Son of God because he speaks precisely the words of his own Father. And he can do this because he has heard the Father. He's been with the Father.

And he's, because he's from above, from the heavenly realm of God, as opposed to from the earth below, like these Pharisees, the creation that's in rebellion against God. And what is the Father's word that Jesus speaks?

It's in verse 23 and 24. You are from below. I am from above. You are of this world. I am not of this world. I told you that you would die in your sins.

For unless you believe that I am he, you will die in your sins. That's the word of the Father, the word of salvation that Jesus had been proclaiming from the beginning, that Jesus was sent by the Father to rescue us from our sin.

That's why he says, unless you believe that I am he, you will die in your sins. Now, this is a really interesting way to phrase that because what does I am he mean?

[10 : 29] There's no context. He just says, I am he. Who is he? Who is Jesus speaking of? And that's, he says it twice in verse 24 and 25 and also in verse 28.

And the Jews apparently had the exact same question because they say to him, who are you? He said, I am he. Who are you? Tell us. And this phrase, I am he, is an allusion to Isaiah 43, verses 10 to 13, where God says to Israel, his people, you are my witnesses and my servant whom I have chosen, that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he.

Before me, no God was formed, nor shall there be any after me. I, I am the Lord and besides me, there is no savior. He declared and saved and proclaimed when there was no strange God among you and you are my witnesses, declares the Lord.

And I am God and henceforth, I am he. There is none who can deliver from my hand. So, it's kind of confusing at first listen because he goes back and forth with the first person pronoun and third person pronoun.

And the reason why God does that is because he's declaring that he is the only God. No one existed, no God existed before him, no God exists after him.

[11 : 52] He's the one who always is. He is. And though the Israelites had worshipped idols in the past and though they had sought other gods, the only God that they had ever needed, God declares, I am he.

And Jesus now appropriates that powerful claim to divinity for himself. The savior you've been waiting for. The Messiah you've been looking for.

The God whom you've been calling out to. I am he, says Jesus. And so, the only way we can escape dying for our sins is to believe in him and entrust ourselves to him.

And that's what he's referring to when he says, when you have lifted up the Son of Man. The language of lifting up refers to being lifted up on the cross, Jesus' death on our behalf for our sins. And this is the message we proclaim week in and week out, but this is not something that we can take for granted. There was a study published by Ligonier Ministries.

[12 : 56] It was commissioned by, they commissioned it and had Lifeway Research conducted it. And they surveyed 3,000 Americans to see what their theological beliefs were.

And 45% of Americans believe that there are many ways to get to heaven. And what's even more alarming is that 11% of self-proclaimed evangelicals, people who profess to believe in the gospel of Jesus Christ, say that they also believe that there are many ways to get to heaven.

It's 1 in 10, which means if that holds for this group, that's about four of us sitting here right now believe that. There are many ways to get to heaven. But Jesus says very clearly, there's only one way to get to heaven and that is through Him.

Unless you believe that I am He who will die in your sins, Jesus says, we will die in our sins. This may sound exclusive to some of us, especially in Cambridge where we like to a diversity of ideas, we like to learn from different cultures, we like to read different news sources and glean insights from everyone.

But when it comes to salvation, when it comes to belief in God, there's only one salvation. As C.S. Lewis writes about it in his book *Mere Christianity*, that the question of religion is much like arithmetic in this sense.

[14 : 23] He writes, there's only one right answer to a sum and all other answers are wrong. So don't believe someone when they say what you believe is true but what I believe is also true.

You can get to heaven that way but you could also get to heaven this way. it's more intellectually honest to admit that sometimes the beliefs that we hold undermine and contradict other people's beliefs and then we can truly have a meaningful conversation and Jesus does exactly that.

He is the true son of God who liberates people who are enslaved to sin and death. And it says in verse 30 when he said these things many believed in him which is encouraging because Jesus has not had a good track record up to this point.

Many believe in him but apparently we can't quite be encouraged by that because it's a superficial faith. It seems to be a faith that's a simple mental ascent but there's no real commitment to Jesus because if you read along we see that these people who believed in him were also the same people who are seeking to kill him.

The same people who are still dying in their sins as Jesus says. So when Jesus says in verse 31 if you abide in my word you are truly my disciples and you will know the truth and the truth will set you free that foreshadows what is to come.

[15 : 54] It's not enough to simply believe in a mentalist and you need to abide in his word and to abide is to remain in it to hold on to it. and maybe some of you guys have been to Mount Rushmore in South Dakota.

I've not been there myself but I've read about this is that there's apparently two million over two million visitors every year but as that many people go through only few of them understand the fact that the monument doesn't just stay that way without effort.

There needs to be rigorous maintenance work each year and so workers have to inspect the entire face of the mountain to remove bird nests and then pull shrubs growing in the crevices of the rocks and then they also have to most importantly fill the cracks that form naturally on the surface of the mountain because if they don't fill that with a special mixture of granite dust and linseed oil I think that's flaxseed oil and white lead and then it will erode when snow and rain seep in and then freeze it will shatter the rock the image of the face of the presidents so we don't see all the work that's going in we just simply enjoy this monument when we visit and our faith likewise must be tended to and maintained we must abide in God's word and persevere in our faith because the world the flesh and the devil have a wearing effect on us adversities that we face the disappointments the gradual decay of our hopes and loves the chronic temptations that rear their ugly head again and again these have a wearing effect on us and that's one of the reasons why it's so important to gather as the body of believers each week to be renewed in our commitment to be refreshed and reminded of the truth and the same survey

I quoted earlier also notes high level of correlation between church attendance and theological orthodoxy that's why Jesus says if you abide in my word you are truly my disciples and you will know the truth and the truth will set you free and the Jews respond to Jesus in verse 33 we are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone how is it that you say you will become free and they're taking offense at the suggestion that they might potentially be enslaved because they're proud people who boasted of the fact that they were descendants of Abraham and so their spiritual heritage is really something that no one else can claim and so for that reason they never thought of themselves as being spiritually enslaved and they're referring to spiritual enslavement here because politically

I mean there was not a major power in the ancient world that they had not been enslaved they've been enslaved by a lot of people right I mean Egypt Roman Empire Syria Babylon Greeks everyone and so they're talking about spiritual enslavement and Judaism taught that if you study the Torah which is the first five books of the Bible that it would make you free so it's surprising then that to these Jews who had dedicated their lives to studying the Torah Jesus says that suggests that they are enslaved presently that they need to be free and in doing so he's of course saying something about himself that he's the one that the law was pointing to he's the one the truth that can set them free and so he explains this further in verse 34 truly truly I say to you everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin while it is true that they are biologically offspring of Abraham they are not spiritually the offspring of Abraham so they can't put their confidence in their heritage and likewise for us it

doesn't matter whether we have believing parents or whether we grew up in the church maybe even our parents are pastors that's not enough for us we need to believe so we need to be set free from our own sin and as I was preparing this

[20 : 13] I was reminded of a show on the Discovery Channel called Moments of Impact are you guys family with? this is not it's not like an ongoing show I think it's like older it's and there's a video that I saw on it one time it showed a teenager with his friends because videoing themselves because they had a pet lion which is I mean really cool I mean if you're a teenager so he had a pet lion and of course they want a record of it so they seem to have fixed the tripod and they were recording this and there's three of them just patting away at this lion and then all of a sudden the lion turns his head and then bites the arm of the teenage boy and then starts pulling him away and so everybody is now up in arms all the adults come they try to pull him away but the lion is stronger than all of them put together keeps pulling him away and so the tug of war of life and death begins and this and it's a fully grown lion too a 500 pound lion and so everyone in that situation and people watching it are shocked right oh I can't believe that happened but really should we be shocked at all

I mean this is a lion a lion is not a pet right and it's lions are apex predators right they hunt and kill that's their instinct that's what they've been trained to do and it's not a freedom to enjoy to have a lion as a pet that's rather terrorizing that's something that's a tyranny to live under and sin is like that as well we think that we can indulge in sin indulge our flesh we think that we can tame sin and tell it to sit and stay and roll over but sin always eventually consumes us sin is by nature enslaving and that's the slavery that we should be most concerned about and this is especially hard for us to remember because we live in the so-called land of freedom but when we remember we can consider this slavery to sin really we live in a land of slavery and Dr. Eric Foley who's the head of the Voice of the Martyrs

Korea which is Voice of the Martyrs is an organization that brings attention to Christians being persecuted throughout the world and tries to provide practical aid and he once did an interview on a radio and said this about North Korean Christians he asked he told them one time hey you know that the American church is praying for you praying for Christians in North Korea and then they responded this way you pray for us we pray for you that's the problem with with the American Christians and South Korean Christians you have so much and you put your faith in your money and in your freedom in North Korea we have neither money nor freedom but we have Christ and we've found he is sufficient they don't pray for the freedoms that we have because freedom in Christ they believe can't be taken away from them they don't pray for regime change they pray they don't pray for freedom and money they pray for more of Christ in their lives to experience this freedom that they have in him and that's in a country that's on the top of the list every year for persecution of Christians being executed for their faith and being sent to internment camps Christians experiencing true freedom in Christ and that's the spiritual freedom that's promised to us by Christ and Jesus alone is able to provide that freedom because he alone is the true son he says in verses 35 to 36 the slave does not remain in the house forever the son remains forever so if the son sets you free you will be free indeed in this culture a slave was a hired hand they owed some kind of debt so they become a slave and until they pay that they work and once they pay that debt they're free to go and so they are not a permanent member of the household but on the other hand the son who belongs to the who's part of the owner's family is part of the household forever and so on that basis Jesus says it's only the son who can liberate slaves for good and notice the word remain he says the son remains forever that's the very same word that

Jesus used earlier to say if you abide in my word you are truly my disciples we must abide in Christ's word because he alone is the true son who abides forever in God's house and in this world as we live we might follow you know the patterns of this world we might think that there's power in the devil's rule and authority exercised here in this world we might indulge our sinful flesh and follow that because we think that those things will remain with us but only the son remains only the son is a permanent member of God's household and so he says when the son sets you free you will be free indeed and Jesus is the true son of God who liberates those enslaved to sin and death so Jesus bears the father's witness Jesus speaks the father's words and now Jesus also does the father's works in stark contrast the Jews who in this passage are seeking to kill him verses 39 to 41

[26 : 12] Jesus says to them if you were Abraham's children you would be doing the works Abraham did 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 you are doing the works your father did so Jesus is saying that true

paternity true heritage comes not from biological descent rather we must do the works of our father and Jesus does the works of the father which is to save and to liberate enslaved those who are enslaved to sin and death but these Jews are doing the works of their father in seeking to kill him and so they object in verse 41 we were not born of sexual immorality we have one father even God now that kind of seems to come out of the blue doesn't it why are they talking about sexual immorality in this situation and the reason there might be two different reasons and the first is they might be making a snide remark being cheeky here referring to

Jesus birth because you know he was conceived by virgin Mary and which to the unbelieving eyes looks very much like you know illegitimate child you know marriage infidelity and so they might be a cheeky way of saying well we were not born of sexual immorality we have one father even God and a second reference maybe to a Samaritan folklore Samaritans as you know were considered by Jews to be racial half-breeds and political rebels who had adulterated religion that's how the Jews viewed the Samaritans and the Samaritans returned the animosity and so they did not get along with each other and they both circulated these slandering stories about the biological origin of Jews and Samaritans and the one that Samaritans liked to throw around was that these Jews were not actually descended from Abraham but that they were descended Abraham was descended from Seth son of Adam but they said that Satan seduced Eve and gave birth to Cain and that they are actually descended from

Cain the line evil line not the promised line so this was a rumor that the Samaritans had been spreading so the Pharisees might be thinking of that and thinking oh Jesus is taking side with the Samaritans so they're saying no we're not born of sexual immorality we have one father even God but of course they're missing the point because Jesus isn't speaking about biological heritage he's speaking about spiritual heritage which is the only kind that counts for him so read verses 42 to 47 with me 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 why do you not understand what I say it is because you cannot bear to hear my word 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 does not stand in 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 a father of lies but because I tell the truth you do not believe me whoever is of God hears the words of God the reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God Jesus lays bare the unbelieving hearts of the Jews right so he says that they are just their father as evidenced by their actions is the devil who deceived Adam and Eve and led them to death he was a murderer and a liar but unlike these pseudo children of God Jesus does the father's works he is without sin as he says which one of you convicts me of sin no one can Jesus is the true son of God who liberates those enslaved to sin and death and now after imagine this is a long back and forth between the Jews and Jesus the Jews that are arguing with Jesus are by this point fully incensed they are extremely angry they say to him in verse 48 are we not right in saying that you are a

Samaritan so that's referring back to the accusations they thought Jesus was leveling at him are we not right in saying that you are a Samaritan and have a demon and Jesus says I do not have a demon but I honor my father and you dishonor me that I do not seek my own glory there is one who seeks it and he is the judge and this riles up the Jews even more and they say well 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 are you greater than our father Abraham who died and the prophets died who do you make yourself be and they can't possibly explain such audacity without resorting to the fact that Jesus must be insane he must be possessed by a demon and then Jesus answers them again verses 54 and 56 if I glorify myself my glory is nothing it is my father who glorifies me of whom you say he is our

[31 : 38] God but you have not known him I know him and he says later your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day he saw it and was glad now notice the parallel here because in verse 50 Jesus had said of God the father that he is the one who seeks glory he is the one who seeks glory but now here in verse 54 he says the father seeks the son's glory the father is glorifying the son and so in saying that Jesus is making a unique identification with the father the father is the only one who seeks glory for himself who can seek rightly seek glory for himself yet this same self same father seeks glory for the son so he's speaking of their unity he shares the father's oneness and the Jews are incredulous and so they scoff at him in verse 57 you are not yet 50 years old and have you seen

Abraham and Jesus responds authoritatively truly truly I say to you before Abraham was I am Jesus doesn't simply say before Abraham was I was that would simply mean that he's really old but no he says I am he is the God who said I am who I am in Exodus 3 14 the eternal God the God who always is the God who is sovereign and not accountable to or dependent on anything or anyone he is that sovereign God he shares the father's oneness and that's why he's the true son who can liberate us liberate those enslaved to sin and death and I hope this morning and I pray this morning that every single one of you come to terms with the full force of what Jesus is saying the claims that he is making because if

I were to stand here and make the same claims that Jesus is making I hope you say that I'm a lunatic I hope you say that I'm possessed by a demon because that's the right assessment if he doesn't back it up and that's what C.S.

Lewis talks about in his book he says I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about him I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher but I don't accept his claim to be God that is the one thing we must not say a man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher he would either be a lunatic on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg or else he would be the devil of hell you must make your choice either this man was and is the son of God or else a madman or something worse you can shut him up for a fool you can spit at him and kill him as a demon or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God but let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher he is not left that open to us he did not intend to so who do you say

Jesus is Jesus claimed that he is a true son of God who liberates those enslaved to sin and death and do you believe that the ultimate proof of that he gave when he died for our sins and rose again from the dead as the first fruit of resurrection life that he promises us and when you believe him we will have life we'll have the light that gives life as Jesus promised in verse 12 so if you're not a believer then I want to exhort you this morning to consider this before you leave talk to someone before you leave and if you are a believer then I encourage you to live in light of the freedom that Christ won for you abide abide in his work because he's the only one who can liberate us from sin and death let's pray together God as we remember your incredible claim you are the true son of [36 : 18] God who saves us Lord we can't help but be thankful that you have revealed this to us the one way of salvation the one and only son of God we pray God you would help us as a church to live in light of this reality and make us bold in proclaiming this truth to those who do not yet know you so that you may be glorified so that you may be all in all in Jesus name we pray amen