Show me your I.D.

Key Verse John 8: 31, 32 “To the Jews who had believed in him Jesus said, “If you hold to my teachings you are really my disciples, then you will now the truth and the truth will set you free.”

In todays passage we think about the Identity of a disciple of Jesus, the Identity of the Jews and finally the Identity of Jesus. There are many kinds of ID (shows passport picture) A passport is a document which verifies a person who travels in a foreign land. When we go to University, we are issued a student ID, which enables us to access all the resources like libraries, gymnasium, pool etc. People identify with careers, for example, I am a teacher, I am a doctor and so on. Our names are the main point of our ID. Our last names associate us with our family, our hereditary lineage and often our ethnicity. Our deeds are also tied to our ID. It may be said, He is a murderer, she is a hero. How a person Identifies shows what is important to them. “I am a good father, I am an athlete, I am a foody, I am thrifty. (Pause) King Charles. Has a new ID after the death of Queen Elizabeth this week. Let’s learn how we can have an upgraded ID, better than King Charles as children of God and Jesus beloved disciples and be issued an authentic passport to the Spiritual world and the eternal Kingdom of God.

Part I

V3 a “To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said… Who were these guys? They appear to have made a profession of faith in Jesus, however Jesus words in v 37b reveal that they were not true believers. “You have no room for my word.” They had no room in their hearts for Jesus. Why did they have no room for Jesus? They were already full, full of themselves, and full of Pride. Let’s read verses 31 and 32 together

To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, “If you hold to my teachings, you are really my disciples, then you will know the truth and the truth will set you free.” They were deeply offended by Jesus statement that they needed to be set free. Verse 33 “They answered him, “we are Abraham’s descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free.” We see that their Identity was wrapped up in the Pride of being Abraham’s descendants. As the physical descendants of Abraham, they believed that they were the chosen race. They had automatic visas to heaven and considered themselves as righteous because they observed the law of Moses. In other words, they were very religious and deeply resented Jesus telling them they needed bible study. From a human point of view, they were the good ones. They were committed and involved in supporting the religious theocracy and were expert theologians. They were so full of their own certainty that they had no room for Jesus words and probably wanted Jesus to fit into their idea of the truth. When my brother visited me this summer, I thought we would be like minded and enjoy Jesus words with me. He and his wife had lived in an intense religious community and studied the bible allot along with “British Israel teaching” and he is a very smart and able man but struggles with pride. After several days with me we were at my mom’s house and I was sharing my belief that Jesus is coming again maybe soon. He became angry and yelled at me “stop preaching at us!” He looked like he was ready to kill me. It seemed to me he was saying “Don’t you now how great I am? I don’t need your words, who do you think you are anyway? There was no room in his heart for Jesus words.

 It is easy to be hard and others, point out their weaknesses and be very lenient and easy on oneself but what did Jesus point out about the nature of sin? Verse 34” I tell you the truth, anyone who sins is a slave to sin.” Sin is like an addiction. I you just can’t stop doing something its probably a sin. Everyone is a sinner. Romans 3:23 says “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” So, then it is not just these guys but everyone who are sinners, are slaves of sin. The Jews identified as Abraham’s descendants not as sinners. What did Jesus tell them about their true identity? V44) You belong to your father the Devil and you want to carry out your father’s desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language for he is a liar and the father of lies. Their true identity is children of the Devil. Children normally look and act like their parents. It is a terrible truth that all of us, in our fallen nature, resemble Satan. In the Garden of Eden Satan tempted Eve saying, “You will be like God” Gen 3:5 “You will not surely die. The serpent said to the woman for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God knowing good and evil. With this lie Satan enslaved all of mankind with the purpose of murdering us. Satan issues everyone a Fake ID stamped with the words “I am a God” being deceived while in really fine print, issued to slave of Satan’s kingdom. People reflect this reality when they mock Jesus urgent plea to hold to his teachings and be set free from sin saying, “who do you think you are preaching to me?”

Part II

About 2.4 billion people around the world identify as Christians. So how can we know who the real disciples of Jesus are? There are so many different denominations more than 45,000 in the world. It makes me dizzy. In my experience most people develop their own ideas and beliefs often incorporating eclectic ideas and philosophies or even syncretizing with local pagan religions such as fertility Goddesses. In China they put Jesus’ picture beside the Chairman jee jin ping in churches. Some maintain you must speak in tongues to be real disciples and others tat you must be dunked or immersed in water to be real or authentic. How are we to know? Look at verse 31 To the Jews who had believed him Jesus said “If you hold to my teaching you are really my disciples, Then you will know the truth and the truth will set you free. Here Jesus says that those who hold firmly to his teachings are the genuine article. When I began bible study with the missionaries of UBF I learned the simple motto “study the bible and live according to its teachings.” This is a very rare thing and not easy because many of Jesus teachings involve sacrifice, obedience and suffering and these are generally things people don’t like especially if it means giving things up or being a social outcast not fitting in at schoolwork or play. “If you hold to my teachings.” Some people believe in Jesus even tasting spiritual blessings but then fall or drift away. (Heb 6:4-6) It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the holy spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age, I they all away, to be brought back to repentance, because to their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace.” Clearly it is possible to be genuinely saved and then fall away. Even Apostle Paul urge us to run with perseverance and discipline himself so that after saving many he might not lose his reward. Some fall away when great trajedy strikes them like the death of a loved one. They become bitter and angry with God doubting his love. Some fall away because they can’t bear being ostracized from their religion like those who didn’t want to be put out of the synagogue or excommunicated by the church and go back to religiosity. Some just drift away because they do not prioritize bible study and fellowship with believers in favour of other things, family, work so some experience in the past is no guarantee of having a Disciple ID but those who hold Jesus’ teachings are really his disciples. That’s why we need to study and teach the bible constantly to hold on. Look at verse 32 Then you will know the truth and the truth will set you free. There is an old Russian proverb which says, “a man is not a man until he has children.” You can understand human anatomy of reproduction and child psychology theory and read a book on raising children, but you will still not “know” what it means until you are a parent. Likewise, it is only by putting Jesus’ teachings in practice in our lives that we truly come to “know” the truth. What then is the effect the truth has on us? The Truth will set you free. What then is the identity of a disciple? In John 6 after many disciples had deserted Jesus, he asked his disciples v67,68 “You do not want to leave too do you….? Simon Peter answered him “Lord to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the Holy one of God. They acknowledge that Jesus is the only way be saved from sin and have eternal life. Jesus disciples must have a needy attitude, their ID is “needy Sinner.” Their ID is “slave longing for freedom.” In the process of holding Jesus, they find true freedom from sin and begin to look less and less like Satan and more and more like Jesus. They become a new creation in Jesus. In Galatians 2:20 Apostle Paul declares “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me, the life I live in the body I live by faith in the son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.” Free Indeed, and with a brand-new ID

Part III

What about Jesus? What is the ID of Jesus according to this passage? John Gospel begins by stating Jesus is the Word who was made flesh. The incarnation of God manifest on earth showing us the exact representation of the father. Jesus identifies himself in John saying I Am the bread of life (6:35), I am the light of the world (8:12) I am the good shepherd (10:11,14) I am the resurrection and the Life (11:25) I am the way and the truth and the life (14:6) I am the true Vine (15:1)

In this passage also makes a claim about his identity. Look at verse 58 “I tell you the truth,” Jesus answered “before Abraham was born I am. Jesus ID is the pre-existent one, the eternal. When Moses stood before the burning bush God identified himself as I am who I am. To the Jews Jesus was addressing who picked up stones to kill him for blasphemy it was very clear what Jesus was claiming about himself. (59) How a person views Jesus is the way we know fake ID from genuine ID. 1 John 4:2 says “This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God; every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God…” Jesus was promised to come from the very beginning to crush the head of Satan. Gen 3:5 b “he will crush your head and you will strike his heel.” In his earthly mission he performed many miracles. John 21:25 tells us “Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written.” Even extra biblical sources like the Jewish historian Josephus, the Babylonian Talmud, The Toledot Jeshu, some written even by Jesus enemies do not discount the many miracles he performed. The Jews simply claimed they were Satan’s works of sorcery to justify their unbelief. The “knowing” of Jesus identity is not an intellectual exercise of reason or evidence. We need the revelation of Jesus Christ. Revelations 1:17a “when I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead…” This is the “knowing” of Jesus personally through the Holy Spirit is the proof of Jesus ID, that he is my savior that he died on the cross to free me from Satan’s power and rose rom the dead tearing open the curtain from top to bottom to enable me to enter the holy of holies. This is the “knowing of ones own self with all pride and self-righteousness striped away. Do you know this Jesus? If you hold to my teachings, you are really my disciples then you will know the truth and the truth will set you free.