

Before Abraham
John 8:48-59

48 Then the Jews answered and said to Him, "Do we not say rightly that You are a Samaritan and have a demon?"

49 Jesus answered, "I do not have a demon; but I honor My Father, and you dishonor Me. 50 And I do not seek My own glory; there is One who seeks and judges. 51 Most assuredly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he shall never see death."

52 Then the Jews said to Him, "Now we know that You have a demon! Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and You say, 'If anyone keeps My word he shall never taste death.' 53 Are You greater than our father Abraham, who is dead? And the prophets are dead. Who do You make Yourself out to be?"

54 Jesus answered, "If I honor Myself, My honor is nothing. It is My Father who honors Me, of whom you say that He is your God. 55 Yet you have not known Him, but I know Him. And if I say, 'I do not know Him,' I shall be a liar like you; but I do know Him and keep His word. 56 Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad."

57 Then the Jews said to Him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?"

58 Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM."

59 Then they took up stones to throw at Him; but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by. NKJV

The controversy between the Jews and Jesus has reached a new height. And they have sunk to name calling. But their anger is hardly what it will soon be. As one person I heard said, the reason why people do not express rage against Jesus is because they do not know enough about him.

The problem with many churches is that they do not present Jesus plainly enough that the lost world might reject Him. We think we are trying to sell Jesus. Jesus did not come to sell Himself. He came to proclaim exactly who He was and what His purpose was and He came to proclaim the truth. He did not come to work out a compromise, but to demand an unconditional surrender.

He has plainly proclaimed that those who do not receive Him or His word are not of God but of the devil and the works of their father the devil they will do. What about you? Have you worked out a compromise with God. You will worship a little, give a little, study His word a little and for that you expect God's blessings. Got news for you. If you have got a deal like that with God, you didn't get it from God, but from the devil masquerading as God.

Let us look at this passage today and understand and accept exactly who Jesus said He was.

- I. He is a Samaritan and has a demon.
 - A. Then the Jews answered and said to Him, "Do we not say rightly that You are a Samaritan and have a demon?"
 - 1. They could not think of something worse to call Him.

2. The Samaritan were despised as half-breeds more that the Jews even despised the Gentiles.
 3. The idea of having a demon means to be controlled by evil demonic powers.
 4. There was no evidence of these accusations but that was not the purpose.
 5. They just wanted to humiliate Him.
- B. Jesus answered, "I do not have a demon;
1. He denies that He has a demon and gives several proofs.
 2. But I honor My Father, and you dishonor Me.
 - a. Everything He has done was to bring glory and honor to the Heavenly Father.
 - b. His life was dedicated to that.
 - (1) Isn't amazing that even a life given fully to God can be shamefully treated and slandered.
 - (2) No one therefore is above reproach.
 - (3) If they treated our Savior so, will the world not also do the same to His followers.
 - (4) We are coming to the point that Christians faced in the early centuries, in that they were not respected but considered the scourge of the earth.
 3. And I do not seek My own glory;
 - a. This is a good indicator of spirituality.
 - (1) Who gets the credit?
 - (2) Who's name is in the by line?
 - b. Jesus did not seek His own glory or He would have followed the leading of the Pharisees and Sadducees.
 - c. Jesus said that the religious leaders did their religious duties to be seen of men, not God.
 - (1) Matt 6:1-4 "Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven. 2 Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say

to you, they have their reward. 3 But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, 4 that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly. NKJV

4. There is One who seeks and judges.
 - a. He was not looking to be judged by them.
 - b. Only when we seek the honor that comes God alone, and only when we realize that God's judgment alone matters can we be focused on what matters in this life and serve Him without worldly intimidation.

II. Jesus claims to be the giver of eternal life, once again.

A. Most assuredly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he shall never see death."

1. What a claim, to say to those around Him, If you keep My word, you shall never see death.
 - a. John 3:15-16 that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. 16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. NKJV
 - b. John 5:24 "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life. NKJV
 - c. John 6:50 This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die. NKJV
 - d. John 11:25-26 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. 26 And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?" NKJV

B. How does this work?

1. The word of Christ is proclaimed.
2. The Holy Spirit takes that word and makes it real, true to us and by that word the Holy Spirit quickens a lost person and makes them a part of the family of God.
3. The Holy Spirit continues to work in them throughout their entire lives and assures them eternal life by that inward working.
4. Thus those who keep His word shall never die.

Part 2

III. The Jews' objections.

- A. 52 Then the Jews said to Him, "Now we know that You have a demon! Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and You say, 'If anyone keeps My word he shall never taste death.' 53 Are You greater than our father Abraham, who is dead? And the prophets are dead. Who do You make Yourself out to be?"
- B. Abraham and the great prophets have all died, how then could He offer something greater than what they had or were.
1. They supposed that Jesus spoke only of physical life and death.
 2. That is what they were most concerned with.
 3. But Jesus knew better than these Jews that although Abraham and the prophets had lived and died that they certainly were not dead.
 - a. Jesus arguing with the Sadducees concerning the resurrection said this in Mark 12:26-27 But concerning the dead, that they rise, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the burning bush passage, how God spoke to him, saying, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? 27 He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living. You are therefore greatly mistaken." NKJV
 4. So then the great men and women of the Old Testament were more alive than they had been when they walked upon the earth.
 5. Now Jesus gives His testimony concerning these things that the Jews could never know, because they were finite and not infinite.
 - a. Jesus knew what lay beyond death because He was the designer of the afterlife.
 - b. God created the spiritual world of which we are all a part.
 - c. We are spiritual beings, having a part of us that will exist for ever in one place or another, heaven or hell.

IV. Jesus answers their objections.

- A. 54 Jesus answered, "If I honor Myself, My honor is nothing. It is My Father who honors Me, of whom you say that He is your God. 55 Yet you have not known Him, but I know Him. And if I say, 'I do not know Him,' I shall be a liar like you; but I do know Him and keep His word. 56 Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad."
1. Once again Jesus appeals to the will of the heavenly Father as the source of all that He does.

2. He also claims that He is in perfect agreement with the Father.
 3. Then He accuses them of not knowing God at all, but being deceived about their relationship with the Father.
 4. He tells them that if He said that He did not know God then He would be a liar like them.
 5. Then He refers to Abraham as having seen His day, and rejoicing in it.
 - a. Abraham had had faith in God's word.
 - b. By faith he left the land of his fathers and followed as God let him.
 - c. By faith he received his son Isaac as risen from the dead, thus receiving a foretaste of the resurrection.
 - d. By faith he intervened for Lot and his family to the very face of Jehovah, who is none other than Jesus Christ.
- B. 57 Then the Jews said to Him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?"
1. Because they do not understand His spiritual nature.
 2. Because they do not understand His eternality.
 3. Because they do not understand His deity.
- C. 58 Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM."
1. They knew that Jesus was referring to Ex 3:14 And God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And He said, "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.' "
 - a. It is not that God has been around longer than anyone else, it is that God has always had an eternal existence.
 - b. And that is what Jesus is claiming for Himself.
 - c. "I AM (theol) an emphatic statement in Greek that is a perfect translation of the divine name I AM, found in Ex. 3:14. The Lord Jesus Christ applied this name repeatedly to Himself during the course of His public ministry. In John's Gospel, Christ weaves the divine name I AM into His testimony concerning Himself at least twenty—one times, in fourteen distinct pronouncements or sayings (some repeated): (1) John 6:35, 48, 51; (2) 7:34; (3) 8:12; (4) 8:18; (5) 8:28; (6) 8:58; (7) 10:7,9; (8) 10:11, 14; (9) 11:25; (10) 14:3; (11) 14:6; (12) 15:1,5; (13) 17:24; (14) 18:5, 6, 8. The name is also used by the risen and enthroned Christ in Rev. 1:8, 11, 17." NAVES STUDY BIBLE, Revised and Expanded Edition, Baker

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- (1) John 6:35, 48, 51; Jn 6:35 And Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst. 48 I am the bread of life. 51 I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world."
- (2) John 7:34; You will seek Me and not find Me, and where I am you cannot come."
- (3) John 8:12 Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."
- (4) John 8:18; I am One who bears witness of Myself, and the Father who sent Me bears witness of Me."
- (5) Jn 8:28 Then Jesus said to them, "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and that I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father taught Me, I speak these things.
- (6) Jn 8:58 Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM."
- (7) Jn 10:7 Then Jesus said to them again, "Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. **Jn 10:9** I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.
- (8) John 10:11, 14; Jn 10:11 I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep. Jn 10:14 I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own.
- (9) John 11:25;Jn 11:25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live.

- (10) John 14:3; Jn 14:3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.
- (11) John 14:6; Jn 14:6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.
- (12) John 15:1, 5; Jn 15:1 "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Jn 15:5 I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.
- (13) John 17:24; Jn 17:24 Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.
- (14) John 18:5, 6, 8; Jn 18:5 They answered Him, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus said to them, "I am He." And Judas, who betrayed Him, also stood with them. 6 Now when He said to them, "I am He," they drew back and fell to the ground. Jn 18:8 Jesus answered, "I have told you that I am He. Therefore, if you seek Me, let these go their way,"
- (15) The name is also used by the risen and enthroned Christ in Rev. 1:8, 11, 17. Rev 1:8 "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End," says the Lord, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty." Rev 1:11 saying, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last," and, "What you see, write in a book and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia: to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea." Rev 1:17 And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, "Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. NAVES STUDY BIBLE, Revised and Expanded Edition, Baker Book House, 1978.

V. Their solution.

- A. 59 Then they took up stones to throw at Him; but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.

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