

John 8:39-59 When the Devil Is Your Daddy

Introduction: John wrote his Gospel as an evangelistic tract. His goal was to persuade unconverted Jews, living throughout the Roman Empire, to believe in Jesus. The conversations recorded in John 7-8 took place during a festival called the Feast of Booths. In it, John brought to light the unreasonable, hardened opposition of the Jewish leadership. As we read this, ask yourself, how did John design this information to cause an unbeliever to believe in Jesus?

Review: Jesus said that although these people were physical descendants of Abraham (as was Jesus Himself), they were not Abraham's spiritual descendants. Jesus at first hinted that He and "the Jews" had different spiritual fathers:

ESV **John 8:37-38** I know that you are offspring of Abraham; yet you seek to kill me because my word finds no place in you. I speak of what I have seen with my Father, and you do what you have heard from your father."

Next, Jesus came right out and pronounced that the devil was their daddy.

******Why did Jesus declare the devil to be their spiritual father (8:39-47)?** It was because they:

- 1) Did not do the works Abraham did (8:39),
- 2) Tried to kill Him (8:39b-40),
- 3) Did not love Him (8:42a),
- 4) Could not bear to hear His word (8:43)—the exact opposite of abiding in Jesus (8:43).

1) What works did Abraham do that they did not do (8:39)? Abraham truly believed God when He promised something, and this true faith resulted in a changed life:

ESV **Genesis 15:6** [Abraham] believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness.

ESV **James 2:21-23** Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works; and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness" . . .

The example of works that James gave was when Abraham obeyed God and was going to offer up Isaac as a sacrifice.

2) What did Abraham *not* do that they were trying to do (8:40)? On the surface, it seems that Jesus was saying that Abraham would not have tried to kill Jesus. On the other hand, Jesus may simply have meant that Abraham's response to God's truth was far different than the Jews' response to truth.

When did Abraham ever even have a chance *not* to kill Jesus (8:40)? During his life, Abraham was visited by divine messengers and did not try to kill them.¹ Once was in the person of Melchizedek and another was when the Lord appeared along with two angels in the form of a man. (A pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus is called a theophany).

In the middle of this discussion about fatherhood, why bring up the topic of “sexual immorality” (8:41)? In the Old Testament, unfaithfulness to Jehovah was described as fornication or adultery, so their statement might have been simply a statement of the purity of their relationship to God.² On the other hand, perhaps it was a slight against Jesus, whose mother apparently became pregnant out of wedlock (virgin birth). Jesus accused them of being spiritual bastards; they retorted that he was literally a bastard.

Why did the Jews shift from claiming Abraham as their physical father to claiming God as their spiritual Father (8:41)? They evidently understood that Jesus was implying that their spiritual father was Satan.

3) In 8:42, according to Jesus, what proved God was not really their spiritual Father? Jesus said that if God really were their father, they would love Him since He came from God.

ESV 1 John 5:1 Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whomever has been born of him.

4) Jesus asked a question in 8:43. What is the answer to His question? Why could they not understand what Jesus said? It was because they could not bear to hear His word.

Contrast: Jesus began this discussion by saying that a true disciple would abide in Jesus’ words (8:31). In contrast, these false “believers” could not bear to hear His word (8:43).

Word Study: The word “can” in “cannot” (8:43) is from *dunamai*, “able”. These people did not have the ability to hear Jesus words. It is the same word used when Jesus said that no one “can” come to the Jesus unless the Father draws him. It takes a supernatural act of God to open someone’s ears.

ESV 1 Corinthians 2:14 The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.

Engine Example: Think about an engine that is already running. An engine has spark plugs that ignite the gasoline that pushes the pistons that turn the crank shaft that powers the alternator that fires the spark plugs. It is a circle. However, to get the engine started in the first place takes power outside the engine. It’ll never start by itself. The battery supplies the initial power to turn the engine and fire the spark plugs. Before there were batteries in cars, the driver had to use a hand crank and his arm muscle to turn the engine over to get it started. So too with us; it takes a divine spark outside of ourselves to open our ears, to make us understand, to free us to believe.

¹ Brown, *John*, 357.

² Brown, *John*, 364.

Since it is true that that a person whose father is the devil cannot understand the things of God because he cannot hear it, how would such a person ever get saved? God has to supernaturally grant him repentance.

ESV 2 Timothy 2:25b-26 God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, and they may escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will.

Based on 8:44, how will you know it if the devil is your daddy? The devil is your daddy if your will (*thelo*) is to do the devil's desires (*epithumia*). So much for the doctrine of free will! The problem is, those under the devil's spell often do not realize they are carrying out the desires of the devil.

What can we learn about the devil from 8:44? He has been a murderer from the beginning and he is a consummate liar.

The first ever murder was when Cain murdered Abel. What role did Satan play in that (8:44)? The devil does not directly murder anybody. Instead, he influences people to murder. Satan was likely behind the "sin" that was crouching at Cain's door.

ESV Genesis 4:6-7 The LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it."

Did you know? The Bible is full of lies! The Bible accurately records the words of Satan, but the truthfulness of what Satan said is quite another matter. Lying is his native tongue.

What is the first lie recorded in the Bible? God said to Adam and Eve that they would die if they ate the fruit. The devil lied to Eve and said they would not die.

Even though Cain's murder of Abel is the first time in history one person murdered another, how might it be argued that the devil actually murdered Adam and Eve? If I pushed a person in front of a bus, even though it was the bus that hit and killed them, I actually murdered that person (the bus was the murder weapon). Similarly, the devil knew that the penalty for disobedience was death, and so he lied to Eve, convincing her to eat the fruit, which resulted in her death. Adam's sin was more culpable since he knew it wrong, but did it anyway after she ate.

Contrast: Jesus is the ultimate truth; Satan is the consummate liar.

Satan Is Real: As disciples of Jesus, we should have no different view of spiritual realities than did our Lord. Jesus clearly believed in the existence of Satan and in Satan's evil influence on the world. Satan is a sinister minister of evil. You need to take his existence in your plans. You give him an inch, and he'll become the ruler. The world is our external foe; the flesh is our internal foe; the devil is our infernal foe. He will cripple you and then blame you for limping.³ We are not ignorant of his schemes. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

³ Rogers, *Adrianisms*, 223-243.

In 8:45 Jesus said that the reason they did not believe Him was precisely “because” He told the truth. How does that relate back to 8:44? It was because their father was the devil, in whom there is no truth. The devil doesn’t tell the truth, and his children can’t recognize the truth.

What problem with the prosecution did Jesus point out in 8:46? They accused Him of sin, but there was no supporting evidence for the accusation. That being the case, Jesus pressed home the thought, “Then why do you not believe me?”

No Sin: Unlike us, Jesus was without sin. This was quite a remarkable claim.

ESV 1 John 1:8 If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

ESV Romans 3:23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

ESV 1 John 1:10 If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

According to 8:47, why did they not hear the words of God? It was because they were not of God. As the monk said when he learned that Naco Libre was a *luchador*, “I knew it! He is not a man of God.”

John’s Point to His Readers: The reason the leadership of Judah rejected Jesus is because they were not of God. They did not understand because they could not hear, and they could not hear because they were not “of God”.

Theological Issue: *Could they not hear because they were not of God, or were they not of God because they could not hear?* As stated above, it was a congenital hearing problem.

Example: Every person is born as either a lost sheep or a lost goat. In the Bible you have lost sheep becoming found, but you never have a sheep becoming a goat.

Why did the Jews try to stone Jesus (8:48-59)? They finally understood that Jesus was claiming to be Jehovah God in human form. Just a few sentences ago when Jesus said, “I am”, they didn’t know what He meant and so asked him, “who are you” (8:24-25).

Insight: Their attempt to kill Jesus proves exactly what Jesus said about them: there were murderers like their father (8:40)!⁴

Back up to 8:48, they accused Jesus of being from Samaria. How was that an insult? Samaritans held to a false form of Jehovah worship, so in essence they were declaring Jesus’ relationship to God to be illegitimate.⁵ In dishonoring Jesus, they were ultimately dishonoring the Father.

⁴ Brown, *John*, 367.

⁵ After the Assyrians “lost” the ten tribes of Israel, replacement colonists from foreign lands were brought in to repopulate the land. These foreign colonists eventually intermarried with the few Israelites who were left in the land. These foreign settlers

ESV **Luke 10:16** . . . the one who rejects me rejects him who sent me.

Jesus said that their father was the devil (8:44), they in turn accused Him of having a demon (8:48). What statement did Jesus make in 8:51 that convinced them that Jesus had a demon? See 8:52. It was because He said that whoever keeps His word would never die, 8:51.

What type of death did Jesus mean when He said whoever keeps His word will never see death (8:51)? Jesus meant that you will never see spiritual death, which is far worse than physical death.

ESV **John 11:25-26a** . . . I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die.

What is the answer to the two questions asked in 8:53? Yes, Jesus is greater than Abraham. He made Himself out to be Jehovah God in human form, **8:54-58**.

Why did Jesus declare the Jews to be liars in 8:55? What were they lying about? Jesus called them liars right to their face.⁶ What they lied about was having God as their Father.

ESV **Revelation 21:8** B. . . as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.

Abraham lived 2,000 years before Jesus was born. How, exactly, did Abraham see Jesus' day (8:56)? According to Hebrews 11, Abraham realized that the physical things promised to him by God were merely shadows of things far greater. The land symbolized heaven. The promised physical offspring was ultimately Jesus (not Isaac). The blessing to all families was the Gospel of justification by faith that the true offspring (Jesus) made possible. Abraham knew that Isaac was just a type, a shadow, a down payment of someone coming through his lineage who was far greater: Jesus.

The very first promise that God would reverse the disastrous actions of Adam and Eve through a coming birth is found in Genesis 3, when God said to Satan:

ESV **Genesis 3:15** I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.

Look at the question in 8:57. How did Jesus answer them? Jesus answered that before Abraham was born, Jesus *already* existed, 8:58.

Why did merely saying "I am" mean that Jesus was claiming to be God (8:58)? Jesus' "I am" declaration sounds a lot like how God described Himself to Moses in the burning bush:

even eventually adopted their own false form of Jehovah worship. To the Jews of Judea, the Samaritans were ethnically impure, had a false form of Jehovah worship, and were a visible reminder of the destruction of Israel.
⁶ Hendriksen, *John*, 64.

ESV **Exodus 3:13-14** Then Moses said to God, "If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?" God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And he said, "Say this to the people of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'"

However, in the Greek translation of the Hebrew for Exodus 3:14, "I AM WHO I AM" is *ego eimi ho on* and the Greek for the 2nd "I AM" statement is simply *ho on*. If Jesus were making a reference to Exodus 3:14, one would expect He might have said, *ho on*. Instead, Jesus said, *ego eimi*. What it does match is the Greek of Isaiah 40-55, where Jehovah repeatedly refers to Himself simply as "I am" (*ego eimi*):⁷

ESV **Isaiah 41:4** . . . I, the LORD, the first, and with the last; I am he.

ESV **Isaiah 43:13** . . . I am he; there is none who can deliver from my hand; I work, and who can turn it back?"

Message Received Loud and Clear: The Jews clearly understood that Jesus was claiming to be God, and so intended to stone Him for blasphemy.

Literary Synthesis: Jesus escaped the stoning by hiding (*krupto*, basis for "cryptic", 8:59. Holding chapters 7 and 8 together as a unit, John recorded that Jesus first came to the Temple in secret (*krupto*, 7:10) and that at the end He left in secret.⁸

Augustine: "As man [Jesus] flees from the stones, but woe to those from whose heart of stone God flees!"⁹

So What?

John wrote this to unbelieving Jews to cause them to believe. How does what John wrote in this passage about the leadership explain to them about why Jesus was rejected? The problem was not with Jesus, it was with the leaders. Jesus was rejected because "the Jews" were of their father, the devil. They were not of God. It was ultimately not a head problem, it was a heart problem.

Furthermore, John wanted his readers to understand that Jesus was Jehovah God in human form. Such a claim would force his readers to decide if Jesus were God, an evil deceiver, or a madman.

Secondary Applications:

1) Anyone who believes in Jesus, regardless of ethnic background, is the true child of Abraham. Thus, the church is the ultimate, true fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham that he would have a multitude of descendants.

⁷ Carson, *John*, 343.

⁸ Brown, *John*, 367.

⁹ Caron, *John*, 358.

ESV **Galatians 3:28-29** There is neither Jew nor Greek . . . for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.

2) Conversely, even if a person is Jewish, but does not believe in Jesus, he is not a true offspring of Abraham. A true Jew is someone who is not merely a Jew outwardly, but inwardly also:

ESV **Romans 2:28-29** . . . no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart . . .

ESV **Romans 9:7** . . . not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring . . .

Jesus clearly said that those Jews who considered Him and then rejected Him were not of God, but were of their father, the devil (8:44). Similarly, Jesus said:

ESV **Revelation 2:9** I know . . . the slander of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.

ESV **Revelation 3:9** . . . I will make those of the synagogue of Satan who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie—behold . . . they will learn that I have loved you.

Important Consideration: This is true not only of Jewish unbelievers, but of any unbeliever:

ESV **1 John 3:8** Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning.

ESV **1 John 5:19** We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.

3) God does not have two peoples, the church and Israel. God only has one people: the church. Theologically, the present situation is not, the church *and* Israel; it is, the church *is* Israel.

However, this does not mean that God has utterly rejected the Jewish race. According to Romans 9-11, because of God's promises to Abraham, God has elected Jews in every generation (a remnant) to believe in Jesus and come into the church, and in this way all the elect within physical Israel will be saved.

John Resinger: Resinger wrote about Abraham's four seeds:

1. Natural Offspring (through Isaac and Ishmael).
2. Special Natural Offspring (through Isaac, then Jacob, then the 12 tribes).
3. Unique Offspring (Jesus the Messiah).
4. Spiritual Offspring (all believers of all ages and all nationalities).

**** = Ask this question before reading the text. This will engage people's minds and focus their attention.

- You can hear this lesson being taught at SermonAudio.com/NTRF.
- Stephen E. Atkerson NTRF.org Revised 11/120/2019