

John 8:51–59

51 Truly, Truly, 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.

“Who is Jesus?” **John 8:48-59**

INTRO:

If you have ever had to brave the internet to find technical support for some program or computer hardware that you own, you have inevitably found yourself on a web page entitled FAQ. FAQ is an acronym for “frequently asked questions.” While we will not be delving into the mysteries of computer software and hardware, we will be exploring another mystery that has over the centuries generated its own list of FAQ. So, I thought it appropriate to give our time together today to the answering of a certain frequently asked question about the Lord Jesus Christ.

The first and the most important of these questions is the question: “Who is this man called Jesus?” We find the answer to this question in a statement Jesus made to some Jewish leaders in our text in **John 8**. **“Jesus said to them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.’”** Our exploration will have two parts.

I. Who Is Jesus?

II. Why is this Important to Us?

I. Who Is Jesus?

A. Remember last time, how the Jews accused Jesus of being a Samaritan and having a demon. (v. 48) Jesus responded he didn't seek to glorify Himself. Rather, His desire was simply to honor the Father Who sent Him.

1. This led into our text in **verse 51**.

“Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death.”

A person who believes in the Son of God and remains in His Word will never die spiritually. That person's future is in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ who saved him or her.

2. This response struck a nerve with these Jews.

“The 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.’ Are you greater than our father Abraham, who died? And the prophets died! Who do you make yourself out to be?’”

The mention of Abraham and the prophets was supposed to shame the Lord Jesus into retreating from the claim He just made. There are two issues in this statement. **(1)** The Jews anticipated that His answer to the first question would be no. And **(2)** the implication in the last question is that Jesus is exalting Himself to a place that He had no business being.

3. Our Lord answered both sides of this issue. First, to the charge that He is exalting Himself Jesus replied.

“If I glorify Myself, My glory is nothing. It is My Father who glorifies Me, of whom you say, ‘He is our God.’ But 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.”

In short, the Lord said, if this were just Me glorifying myself, that would be nothing. Your problem is that God the Father, whom you claim as your God and Father, glorifies Me! You claim to know Him, when you don't. I say I know Him because to deny it would make me a liar. You cannot win because I am not interested in glorifying myself. I am interested in the truth.

4. Second, as far as being greater than Abraham,

“Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad.” (v. 56)

Some wonder when it was that Abraham saw the Lord's Day and was extremely glad. Frankly, we do not know when this happened, a prophetic vision granted him in his human life or if he saw it in heaven. Still, the fact is Abraham is not in opposition to Jesus. He rejoiced in the work that the Son of God would do.

5. All of this sent the Jews into a tizzy. You can hear the sarcasm in their voices as they respond in **verse 57**,

“Then the Jews said to Him, ‘You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?’”

B. In response to their sarcasm, our Lord replied.

“Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.”

What did the Lord actually say?

1. Some insist He claimed nothing more than He preexisted before Abraham was born. If this was the case, we would expect to read, *“Before Abraham came to be, I came to be”*, or even *“I was.”* But that is not what Jesus said. In fact, if Jesus had said this, we would not read what we read in **verse 59**,

“So they picked up stones to throw at Him, but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple.”

A claim of preexistence falls short of a claim of deity.

2. The language is decidedly not a claim of simple preexistence alone. Rather, the sentence in the Greek literally reads, ***“Before Abraham came to be, I AM.”*** What exactly did Jesus claim? Our minds immediately go back to a scene on the backside of the desert. Moses is standing in the presence of the LORD hearing his marching orders. (**Exodus 3:1-17**) Moses’ first objection was he could not do the job because he was a nobody. (**Exodus 3:11**)

“But Moses said to God, ‘Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?’ So He said, ‘I will certainly be with you. And this shall be a sign to you that I have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain.’”

God plus a nobody is a somebody!

3. Moses’ second objection which is of interest to us here, we read about it in **verse 13-14 of Exodus 3**.

“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.’”*** We need to grasp God’s reply. This statement is the root of the covenant name of God, Yahweh. It speaks of God’s eternity, His self-existence, and His self-sufficiency. Our God is not the One who was, but is the One who always is! He is eternally present. Our God said to Moses,

“You go and tell them the One who is eternally present has sent you to them!”

4. So, when Jesus said to the Jewish leaders ***“Before Abraham came to be, I AM,”*** He triumphantly claimed to be the same Yahweh who spoke to Moses out of the burning bush. These words are a clear identification with Yahweh in the Old Testament. We find them repeated many times in Isaiah. An example is **Isaiah 43**. Let me cite just two examples.

“For I am the LORD your God, The Holy One of Israel, your Savior; I gave Egypt for your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba in your place.” Isaiah 43:3

Isaiah 43:15 ***“I am the LORD, your Holy One, The Creator of Israel, your King.”***

The ***“I AM”*** statement is an unequivocal statement of the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ.

C. John was not shy about making this connection in his Gospel. We read in **John 12:37-41**, *“Though He had done so many signs before them, they still did not believe in Him, so that the Word spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: ‘Lord, who has believed what he heard from us, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?’ Therefore they could not believe. For again Isaiah said, ‘He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, lest they see with their eyes, and understand with their heart, and turn, and I would heal them.’ Isaiah said these things because he saw His glory and spoke of Him.”*

This clearly refers back to **Isaiah 6** and identifies the Lord Jesus with Yahweh of the Old Testament.

D. Some would deny this, yet, the Jews of Jesus’ day certainly understood what He claimed for they responded with the penalty for blasphemy. (v 59)

“So they picked up stones to throw at Him, but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple.”

Some say Jesus never claimed to be God. It seems the Jews of Jesus’ day disagreed. (5:18) *“Therefore the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, because He not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God.”*

II. Why is This Important to Us?

A. Why did John put this here for us? First, he wrote this because it is crucial we understand who Jesus was and is. We must understand the One who came and died for us is none other than the eternal God in human flesh. This underlines the impact of what Jesus did for us. **Philippians 2:5-8** tells us,

“Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made Himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”

If He was willing to do this for us, what are we willing to do for Him?

B. Second, this underlines again our Lord’s statement to the Jews in **John 8:24**.

“Therefore, I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.”

If we do not believe He is the great **“I AM”** we cannot be saved.

D. Third, remember the challenge Elijah gave to the people of Israel on Mount Carmel.

“And Elijah came near to all the people and said, ‘How long will you go limping between two different opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, then follow him.’”

Our choice is between ourselves and Jesus. Since the Lord Jesus is God, we need to faithfully and wholeheartedly follow Him!

Hymn #114 His Name is Life