

“Before Abraham was, I AM” John 8:48-59

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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. John 8:48–59 (NKJV)

When Jesus calls Himself, “I AM” He is referring to Exodus 3:13-14, when Moses, at the burning bush, asked God for His Name –

¹³ Then Moses said to God, “Indeed, *when* I come to the children of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they say to me, ‘What *is* His name?’ what shall I say to them?”

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.’ ” Exodus 3:13–14 (NKJV)

There God was about to save Israel from bondage in Egypt / Here God / Jesus is nearing saving His people from bondage to sin

Yet they think they have no need of Salvation -

I. See, Jesus' enemies Satanic spitting of venom -

⁴⁸ Then the Jews answered and said to Him, "Do we not say rightly that You are a Samaritan and have a demon?" John 8:48

"Nicknames, insulting epithets, and violent language, are favorite weapons with the devil. When other means of carrying on his warfare fail, he stirs up his servants to smite with the tongue." J. C. Ryle

"Aren't we right in saying ...?" More and more they show how they are stupefied by Satan... John Calvin

1. *The Jews mentioned here stupidly, and arrogantly thought they were CORRECT in regard to insults they would bring against Jesus.*

A. *They call Him first a Samaritan. The Samaritan's were those close neighbors of the Jews, many half-Jew or part Jew, who some 200 years earlier joined the wicked Greek king in over-turning God's Ten Commandments. The current Samaritans of Jesus' day were probably not nearly so bad as their fathers, yet they were hated by the Jews. Calling someone who was a fellow Jew, as Jesus was, a "Samaritan" was like today calling someone in America, a Nazi or Fascist.*

B. *Second, they say of Him, that He possessed a demon ...*

This shows how extremely FAR FROM the truth they were about Jesus! Note, how later Jesus speaking about the Holy Spirit says –

⁸ And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: ⁹ of sin, because they do not believe in Me; ¹⁰ of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; ¹¹ of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged. John 16:8–11 (NKJV)

Convicted, if they were, would be good, it would mean they felt some PAINS of conscience for their sin! Earlier in this chapter, the men who caught the woman in adultery felt conviction for their own sins and refrain from stoning a woman they KNEW had committed adultery. Yet, by the end of this chapter they are ready to throw stones at the sinless Son of God Himself!

2. *We know Jesus was not a Samaritan, nor did He have a demon, yet this kind of name calling continues even today –*

A. *Racism is a problem, even today, but many are called “racist” who are not racists at all.*

B. *I once merely introduced myself to someone as “a Christian” and a person immediately called me “homophobic” and “a hater.”*

C. *Such name-calling is a strategy of Satan and a strategy of those who are WRONG, but will not admit it! That was definitely the case of the enemies of Jesus Christ!*

II. *See, Jesus’ truthful, yet compassionate response -*

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.” John 8:49-51 (NKJV)

1. *He denies what should have been obvious to EVERYONE - “I do not have a demon...”*

2. *He does not deny the Samaritan accusation, why?*

A. *It was not necessary; He obviously was not. Even these people knew that.*

B. *He would die for people from every tribe, tongue, kindred and nations, through Him, all the families of the earth would be blessed, obviously including Samaritans, remember – **John 4.***

He does not deny a connection to those for whom He would die –

⁹ And they sang a new song, saying: “You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, Revelation 5:9 (NKJV)

3. *He asserts simple absolute TRUTH about Himself and His accusers –*

A. **I honor My Father** *This was and is the Chief End of Man –*

W. S. C. Question 1 What is the chief end of man? Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.

- *This is something He did perfectly, continually, beautifully, He always honored His Father!*
- *This was His calling.*

B. *It is while He is honoring God perfectly, that they dishonor Him **and you dishonor Me.***

- *Jesus did not seek His own glory, but God's ...*
- *Jesus was not judging, but God was and Jesus knew what grave ERROR it was for His accusers to accuse Him, like they were, God the Father is the ONE Who would judge them for dishonoring Jesus!*

4. *Even in the midst of FALSE ACCUSATIONS He speaks out a word of evangelistic (good news) encouragement –*

⁵¹ **Most assuredly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he shall never see death.” John 8:51 (NKJV)**

III. Yet the WORST spin is applied even to the most gracious part of Jesus' message -

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?” John 8:52-53

1. *Note, Jesus speaks of salvation from death!*
2. *They cannot think beyond death, they count Abraham as dead, the prophets as dead ... Jesus saw His own differently, consider ...→*

31 But concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God, saying, ³² ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.” ³³ And when the multitudes heard *this*, they were astonished at His teaching. Matthew 22:31–33 (NKJV)

IV. Greater, even more wonderful Theological Truth spoken by Jesus, but missed and denied by the LOST -

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. John 8:54–59 (NKJV)**

1. God honors Jesus - :54

¹¹ Then a voice came from heaven, “You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” Mark 1:11 (NKJV)

2. The ungodly, those who reject Jesus, do not know God –

⁵⁵ Yet you have not known Him, :55 A

3. Jesus both knew God and kept His Word –

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. :55 B

4. Abraham rejoiced to see Jesus’ day –

⁵⁶ Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw *it* and was glad.” :56

How?

18 Then the LORD appeared to him by the terebinth trees of Mamre, as he was sitting in the tent door in the heat of the day. ² So he lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, three men were standing by him; and when he saw *them*, he ran from the tent door to meet them, and bowed himself to the ground, ³ and said, “My Lord, if I have now found favor in Your sight, do not pass on by Your servant. ⁴ Please let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree. ⁵ And I will bring a morsel of bread, that you may refresh your hearts. After that you may pass by, inasmuch as you have come to your servant.” They said, “Do as you have said.” ⁶ So Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah and said, “Quickly, make ready three measures of fine meal; knead *it* and make cakes.” ⁷ And Abraham ran to the herd, took a tender and good calf, gave *it* to a young man, and he hastened to prepare it. ⁸ So he took butter and milk and the calf which he had prepared, and set *it* before them; and he stood by them under the tree as they ate. ⁹ Then they said to him, “Where *is* Sarah your wife?” So he said, “Here, in the tent.” ¹⁰ And He said, “I will certainly return to you according to the time of life, and behold, Sarah your wife shall have a son.” (Sarah was listening in the tent door which was behind him.) ¹¹ Now Abraham and Sarah were old, well advanced in age; *and* Sarah had passed the age of childbearing. ¹² Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, “After I have grown old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?” ¹³ And the LORD said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh, saying, ‘Shall I surely bear *a child*, since I am old?’ ¹⁴ Is anything too hard for the LORD? At the appointed time I will return to you, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son.” ¹⁵ But Sarah denied *it*, saying, “I did not laugh,” for she was afraid. And He said, “No, but you did laugh!” Genesis 18:1–15 (NKJV)

The LORD? The Trinity? Jesus and two angels? Most commentators see this passage communicating a pre-incarnate visit from Jesus Christ. The LORD predicts Issac’s birth, but some say this and the passages the FOLLOW, would have Abraham anticipating Jesus Christ’s birth as well.

I think Abraham also saw Jesus when He offered up Isaac, his only son with Sarah, his son of promise. I believe he delighted to see the day Jesus was born!

5. *Yet, the Jews immediately questioned this as well –*

57 Then the Jews said to Him, “You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham? John 8:58

A. *What they say is telling, they were not seeing what Jesus’ followers saw –*

14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. John 1:14 (NKJV)

B. *They saw flesh and nothing more –*

53 Who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? ² For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, And as a root out of dry ground. He has no form or comeliness; And when we see Him, *There is no beauty that we should desire Him.* ³ He is despised and rejected by men, A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, *our* faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. Isaiah 53:1–3 (NKJV)

In fact, later in John’s Gospel these very verses are mentioned -

37 But although He had done so many signs before them, they did not believe in Him, ³⁸ that the word of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spoke: “*Lord, who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?*” ³⁹ Therefore they could not believe, because Isaiah said again: ⁴⁰ “*He has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts, Lest they should see with their eyes, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I should heal them.*” ⁴¹ These things Isaiah said when he saw His glory and spoke of Him. John 12:37–41 (NKJV)

6. *Jesus responds –*

58 Jesus said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM.**” John 8:58 (NKJV)**

A. *Here Jesus is claiming eternity -*

B. *Here Jesus is claiming that He is God –*

13 Then Moses said to God, “Indeed, *when* I come to the children of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they say to me, ‘What *is* His name?’ what shall I say to them?”

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.’ ” Exodus 3:13–14 (NKJV)

I AM was and is God’s Name & **I AM** right here is Jesus’ claim!

59 Their response -

60 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. John 8:54–59 (NKJV)

Earlier in the chapter they believed Him about being God’s Son, here they are ready to stone Him!

Arnold A. Brevick