

JOHN 8:39-59
PHYSICAL OR SPIRITUAL BIRTH?

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to John chapter 8 as we continue our in-depth study of the Gospel of John.

In John chapter 8 we see Jesus once again debating the Jewish religious leaders and trying to teach the Jewish people who He is and what He has come to do.

The key to this chapter is what Jesus said in John 8:12, “... **‘I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.’**”

Think about trying to walk around your house when it is dark, no lights on. You might remember where some things are located, and you can carefully walk around. But chances are you would probably bump into things, maybe even stub your toe!

But if you were to turn on the light, how easy it would be to walk. You could see where you are going!

Think about the world we live in. The darkness that permeates it. And people are walking in this darkness, and they don't know where they are going, they just stumble through life hoping that they are going in the right direction.

Let me share this with you and you will see how darkness affects people.

We are told,

In the mid-1960s, two people participated in research on the effects of darkness on the human psyche. They entered separate caves, while researchers tracked their eating and sleeping habits. One remained in total darkness for 88 days, the other 126 days. Each guessed how long they could remain in darkness and were off by months. One took what he thought was a short nap only to discover he'd slept for **30 hours**. Darkness is disorienting.

The people of God found themselves in the darkness of impending exile. They waited, unsure of what would take place.

The prophet Isaiah used darkness as a metaphor for their disorientation and as a way of speaking about God's judgment (Isaiah 8:22).

Previously, the Egyptians had been visited with darkness as a plague (Exodus 10:21-29).

Now Israel found herself in darkness.

But a light would come. ***"The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned"*** (Isaiah 9:2). Oppression would be broken, disorientation would end. A Child would come to change everything and bring about a new day - a day of forgiveness and freedom (v. 6).

Jesus did come! And although the darkness of the world can be disorienting, may we experience the comfort of the forgiveness, freedom, and light found in Christ.

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That is what Jesus is speaking of here. The light that the prophets spoke of has come in the person of Jesus Christ!

But the Jewish religious leaders could not accept that, and they came after Jesus to discredit Him, they mocked Him, they accused Him of being born out of wedlock, which we will see them do again in our study this morning.

The bottom line is this, and this is something they could not accept, and many can't today. That is the fact that Jesus is Almighty God! And here is the problem for many today. If you reject that you will die in your sins. Now don't get mad at me, because Jesus told the Jewish religious leaders and He is telling us, that if you do not believe that He is the great I AM, Almighty God, you will die in your sins! (John 8:24)

The timeframe here is just after the Feast of Tabernacles that was spoken of in John chapter 7. That means that the cross and Passover is about six months away! And yet Jesus is pouring into His men the things that they will need to carry on the work after He is gone!

I have called this study – ***PHYSICAL OR SPIRITUAL BIRTH!***

The reason being is that these Jewish religious leaders thought they were saved based on their physical birth, they were Jewish. And Jesus is going to show them that a person's salvation has nothing to do with their physical birth, it doesn't matter if you are Jewish or not, but it has everything to do with your spiritual birth, being born again!

I have broken these verses down into several points and they are as follows:

TRUTH AND MOCKING – JOHN 8:39-47

NOTHING TO STAND UPON – JOHN 8:48

THE CHALLENGE BY JESUS – JOHN 8:49-51

THE CHALLENGE BY THE PHARISEES – JOHN 8:52-53

FATHER ABRAHAM – JOHN 8:54-56

UNBELIEF BY THE PHARISEES – JOHN 8:57

THE GREAT “I AM” – JOHN 8:58***ARE YOU UPSET – JOHN 8:59***

So we do have some ground to cover this morning.

Let me share a few verses that will lead us into our study this morning. In John 8:37-38, and this is from The Amplified Bible, and we are told, **“[Yes] I know that you are Abraham’s offspring; yet you plan to kill Me, because My word has no entrance (makes no progress, does not find any place) in you. I tell the things which I have seen and learned at My Father’s side, and your actions also reflect what you have heard and learned from your father.”**

This is the debate that is going on and, in these verses that we will be looking at in a minute, it is continuing to go on.

With that as our introduction, let’s begin reading in John chapter 8, beginning in verse 39 and let’s see what the Lord has for us this morning as we look at this topic – ***PHYSICAL OR SPIRITUAL BIRTH!***

JOHN 8**VERSES 39-47**

As you can see, this is a very interesting conversation between the Jewish religious leaders, mostly the Pharisees, and Jesus.

And you can clearly see why I have called this section – ***TRUTH AND MOCKING!***

And here's the thing. When someone does not have any ground to stand upon, they will mock you, call you names or just walk away. What we see here is an assault upon Jesus as they mock Him when He is trying to tell them the truths of God!

Remember, they were very proud of their spiritual heritage. Back in John 8:33 we see this played out for us as they said to Jesus, **“They answered Him, ‘We are Abraham’s descendants, and have never been in bondage to anyone. How can You say, “You will be made free”?””**

And we see that here in John 8:39 where they told Jesus, **“... ‘Abraham is our father.’ .
:”**

And then we see that Jesus acknowledges the fact that they are descendants of Abraham by physical birth but spiritually speaking they are not his children, in fact Jesus says that they follow their father, and He tells us who their father is in the verses we have read, and we will expound on them in a few minutes. I will let you in on a little secret, it is absolutely not what they thought or believed!

But the reason they are not of Abraham is because they have rejected Jesus and the Father who sent Him!

In other words, they were all talk and no action. And what I mean by that is that they said they followed God the Father, they were descendants of Abraham, which was true. The problem was they did not do the works that Abraham did!

And there are a lot of religious people out there, those who say they love God and yet, when you look at what they do, what they say, you clearly can see that they don't know God!

That is what Jesus is telling the Jewish religious leaders here and that had to hurt them, hurt their pride and it did!

And here is another issue that shows that they were not right with God. For the Jews, they felt that because they were the descendants of Abraham, they had a get out of Hell free card, but that is not the case. You see, it is not important where your physical birth is from, but your spiritual birth, are you born again in Christ?

Look at what people do today, the money they spend to find out their physical heritage. And if you want to do that, that is fine, it is interesting. But the bigger issue is not your physical heritage, but have you come to saving faith and joined the family of God!

Paul, in Romans 9:6-8 says, **“But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. For they are not all Israel who are of Israel, nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but, ‘In Isaac your seed shall be called.’ That is, those who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed.”**

Paul is speaking of the Jewish people and his point is this. Just because you are a descendant of Abraham, physical genealogy, doesn't make you a child of God, you need that spiritual birth, that spiritual kinship and Jesus deals with that issue in these verses.

And as we read these verses, we see that Jesus is saying that our spiritual parentage determines not only our destiny but also our nature. Notice, they claimed to be descendants of Abraham and yet they disobeyed the works of Abraham, as I have said.

Now here is the question I will give to you.

What were the works of Abraham that justified him before God?

Abraham was justified by faith and not by works, and thus, they were not children of God and their nature reflected that as they wanted to kill Jesus.

We are told in Romans 4:1-4 regarding the faith of Abraham, not his works. Paul wrote, **“What then shall we say that Abraham our father has found according to the flesh? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? ‘Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.’ Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt.”**

Did you see that?

Abraham was justified by faith, he believed God and that belief was manifested in his works.

What the Jews were doing and what many do today is they put the cart in front of the horse, you might say.

What do I mean by that?

I mean that they are working their way into heaven and that is not how it works. Works don't save us, Jesus does!

First comes belief or a spiritual birth, you are born again and then comes the good works not for salvation but for our identification with the Lord!

Paul deals with that in Romans 9:30-33 where he wrote, **“What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness of faith; but Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness. Why? Because they did not seek it by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone. As it is written: ‘Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offense, And whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.’”**

Now some may wonder, how do we know if we are children of God? What do we have to believe?

We are told by John in I John 5:1-3, **“Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.”**

You see, believe and then what God has done on the inside of us is manifested in our outward actions, the things we do and the things we say. It is that simple!

Works don't save us, but they are the fruit that is born out of a relationship with Jesus. Good works should be seen in our lives and if they are not, then James tells us that our faith is dead!

And Jesus gets their attention when He tells them, **“You do the deeds of your father. . .”** John 8:41.

Here we see the Jewish religious leaders coming after Jesus and they come down hard upon Him.

They are saying that they know their father, Abraham and yet Jesus, born out of fornication in their mind, did not know who His father was.

But Jesus corrects them on that. He tells them that He came from the Father and yet, they say that God is their father, but their actions and words speak differently.

Why?

Because they rejected Jesus, the One the Father sent. Here is a very important point; your love for Jesus will determine who your Father is!

Notice the mocking of Jesus and they are mocking Him because they have nothing to stand upon in this argument and Jesus did and He just speaks forth the truth!

Now, here in John 8:43 we are told, “**Why do you not understand My speech? Because you are not able to listen to My word.**”

I like the way The Amplified Bible puts this verse, “**Why do you misunderstand what I say? It is because you are unable to hear what I am saying. [You cannot bear to listen to My message; your ears are shut to My teaching.]**”

How true that is today. People shut their ears; they don't want to hear what is being said.

Why is that?

Because people want to do what they want and thus, they negate the things of God so they can appease their fleshly desires. Jesus told them that if they were really the children of Abraham, then they would do the works that Abraham did, or they would believe upon Jesus being the Messiah because by faith Abraham believed!

But their response is they wanted to kill Jesus and in doing so they would not be following the faith of Abraham, but they are following another father and not God the Father!

Jesus told them that they are following the Devil, he is their father because of the things they were doing!

Now these words of Jesus had to sting, it had to cut to their heart, but I believe they blocked the sting and hardened their hearts so that the conviction of God could not cause them to turn back to God and repent.

The problem for them is they refused to *listen to the words* that Jesus spoke!

One writer put it like this, *“The impossibility was spiritual. Prejudices, jealousies, and antagonisms made the real Christ inaudible to them though His every syllable fell upon the ear.”* (Morrison)

How many people today, because of traditions, the way that they were brought up, what this person has said or that book has said, refuse or negate what God’s Word has to say. We are no different today, these things get in the way of our listening to the words of Jesus!

It is as Paul said in II Corinthians 4:3-4, **“But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.”**

I truly believe that once we open the door of our hearts to Christ, His light will expel the darkness of Satan and we will see, we will come to the truth. The problem is many people refuse to open their hearts to Him and come!

And I like how Jesus tries to get them to show some sin in His life, and they can’t.

He says, **“Which of you convicts Me of sin?”** (John 8:46)

We have plenty of sin in our lives and thus, that is why we need a Savior, we need Jesus, to cleanse us from our sins. But no one can convict Jesus of sin because He was sinless!

Paul said in Hebrews 4:15 regarding this issue, **“For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.”**

And Peter tells us in I Peter 1:18-19, “**knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.**”

Notice what Jesus tells them about the Devil, that he is the father of lies, that is his natural language! Thus, if you are not listening to Jesus, then you are listening to the Devil and please understand, there is no truth in him.

And what I mean by that is this. His truth will lead you away from God. It may sound good, it may sound right, but it is not!

You see, Satan will use truth, speak mostly truth and then throw in a lie that will totally negate the truth that he spoke.

Now you may be thinking that Jesus said that there is no truth in him, so now I say that he does speak some truth. What is right?

Think of it like this. If I speak a half-truth, what is a half-truth?

It is a lie!

That is exactly what Satan does to confuse people, to trap people, to get them to move away from God!

The best example is given to us in the Garden of Eden when Satan tempted Eve.

He told her, “**Has God indeed said.**” Genesis 3:1.

In other words, challenging what God has said in His Word. And we see that so much today with many allowing sin into the church, accepting it and claiming it is not sin and the reality is this – ***HAS GOD INDEED SAID!***

And where will that end? It won't because once you open the door for sin, it is hard to close!

We need to be careful here because are we justifying some sin in our own lives? If we are then we are listening to Satan and challenging God – ***HAS GOD INDEED SAID!***

We would not see it that way but if we are ignoring what God is saying in His Word, aren't we doing the same thing as Eve did, believing a lie of Satan? I think we are! We need to be careful here.

Next, he told Eve, "**You will not surely die.**" Genesis 3:4.

In other words, he told Eve that there are no consequences to sin, so do whatever you want, you are free! No one should be able to tell you what to do!

Another way to look at this and what many believe today is that of reincarnation, you will never die! Again, that is a lie of the Devil! Also, there are no consequences to sin, do whatever you want! Again, it is a lie of the Devil!

The third thing that Satan said to Eve to deceive her is what we see growing in belief today, "**you will be like God.**" Genesis 3:5.

We see this lie in the New Age movement, we see it in the protestant church today with some of the health, wealth and prosperity teachers, we see it in the Kingdom Now teachings and I see this lie growing until the world believes they are God, part of the beliefs in the Tribulation Period.

And it is interesting because it also speaks of knowing good from evil. Think about that one. If you are not listening to God, you are God, you can decide what is good and what is evil and we see that today!

Good is evil and evil is good because man has turned from God and God has given them over to do these evil things. This is what they wanted, and this is what they have received, and it is never a good thing when it goes against what God has for us. He has good for us, not evil!

You see, if you are not listening to the Lord, His Word, then you are listening to and following the lies of the Devil because those are the only two choices out there. Who are you listening to and who are you following?

And Jesus finishes up by saying this, **“He who is of God hears God’s words; therefore you do not hear, because you are not of God.”** John 8:47.

In other words, the proof is in the pudding. What I mean by that is this. Jesus is telling us that if you hear God’s Word you will obey it. If you don’t, then you will follow whatever you want, and it shows that you are not of God!

These are some pretty harsh accusations against these Jewish religious leaders, the Pharisees! We saw here – ***TRUTH AND MOCKING!***

And we are going to see their response, how they handle these accusations that Jesus made against them. The problem is, they have – ***NOTHING TO STAND UPON!***

VERSE 48

Please understand that these Jewish religious leaders are mad, they are frustrated and yet, they had nothing to say to Jesus to prove their point, to show that Jesus is not the Messiah, to show that they are in good standing with God.

So what they do is they make fun of Jesus, they mock Him, they put Him down.

How did they do that?

First, they called him a Samaritan!

We don't think much about that today, but to the Jews, the Samaritans were the most despised race! They were hated by the Jews, they thought they were nothing more than half-breads, not even Jews.

In fact, during the time of Jesus, if the Jews were traveling to Galilee from Judea or visa-versa, they would not go through Samaria, which was the shortest route.

They instead would go east of the Jordan River along the desert strip called the Trans Jordan or Perea and then cross over again, going twice as far as if they would just go through Samaria.

They would bypass Samaria completely.

In fact, Jewish Rabbis said, ***“Let no man eat the bread of the Cuthites [the Samaritans], for he who eats their bread is as he who eats swine’s flesh.”***

That is obviously not Kosher!

Not only that but a popular prayer in those days went like this, ***“And Lord, do not remember the Samaritans in the resurrection.”***

So, the Jews did not like the Samaritans, not at all. Thus, to walk through the land of Samaria would be something most would never do!

So they call Jesus a Samaritan, and thus, as the Jewish people heard that, they would not look favorably upon Jesus, and that is exactly what the Jewish religious leaders wanted.

Not only did they call Jesus a Samaritan, but also that He has a demon or is demon possessed!

Again, when you have – ***NOTHING TO STAND UPON*** you will resort to name calling and that is what we see here!

So as they are mocking Jesus we see next – ***THE CHALLENGE BY JESUS!***

VERSES 49-51

Here we see Jesus counter their accusations of Him being demon possessed by telling them that He honors God and someone who was demon possessed would not do that.

Why is that?

Because Satan wants all the glory, all the attention, all the power, the very things these religious leaders were after! They wanted the attention, they wanted the glory, they wanted people to look to them.

Jesus pointed people to God the Father and thus, He was not demon possessed!

Also, Jesus was not a Samaritan, He was born in Bethlehem! So, their accusation against Him holds no water, just empty words because they refused to listen to the words of Jesus and believe!

Listen again to what Jesus said in John 8:51, **“Most assuredly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he shall never see death.”**

Is that true or false?

It depends on what you are speaking of. If you are speaking of physical death, then this is not true. We will die, these physical bodies will go back to the dust of the earth unless the Rapture happens before you die.

Jesus is speaking of spiritual things and when these physical bodies die, when this tent falls apart, when the brain waves cease to function, then believers will go to be with the Lord! That is a promise of God.

Our spirit and soul will be present before the Lord as Paul tells us in II Corinthians 5:8, **“We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.”**

You see, the sting of death has been taken away by Jesus and now in death we don't die, we move from these old tents to new mansions, new bodies that Jesus is preparing for us!

He is speaking of eternal life for all who come to Him. But this did not sit well with the religious leaders as we will see.

Remember what we read back in John 8:31-32, what Jesus said, “**. . . ‘If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.’**”

Works do not save us, Jesus does. But make no mistake about it, doing good works, living the Christian faith is the evidence for our salvation. And yes, we are not perfect, we don't always do what we want to do, but it should be the passion of our lives to follow and obey Jesus!

Think about it. Whatever you are feeding yourself with will be manifested in your life. And if you are feeding yourself with the things of this world, then that is what will be manifested in your life! If you are filling yourself up with the things of God than that is what will be manifested in your life.

Jesus put it like this in John 8:34-36, “**. . . ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin. And a slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever. Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.’**”

Do you want to be a slave to sin or free in Christ? The choice is yours but there truly is freedom in Christ and as Paul said, to be absent from this physical body we will be present with the Lord!

But the Jewish religious leaders did not like this and thus we see – ***THE CHALLENGE BY THE PHARISEES!***

VERSES 52-53

Think about what they are saying to Jesus. ***“Who in the world do you think you are? Do you really think you are greater than our father Abraham who is dead? Do you think you are greater than the prophets who are dead? Who do you really think you are, Almighty God?”***

Remember what I told you, that Jesus is speaking on a spiritual level, about spiritual life and they are still focused on the physical, physical death!

Why did they not hear what Jesus was saying?

Because they closed their ears and refused to believe. The truth was before them ready to set them free from the bondage of sin and the bondage of religion that they were in. But they refused to listen and be set free!

You see, Jesus claimed to be God, the God of the living and not the dead!

But they refused to hear that, they refused to see that, they refused to look at the spiritual points that Jesus was making, and they focused on the physical and thus, their question **“Are You greater than our father Abraham, who is dead?”**

And they expected a negative response, Jesus was not greater in their minds, but He is!

Remember when Jesus was dealing with the Sadducees regarding the resurrection, the afterlife, and He said in Matthew chapter 22, **“You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God in heaven. But concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God, saying, ‘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.”** Matthew 22:29-32.

You see, they negated the power of God. Abraham was not dead, he was awaiting the death and resurrection of Jesus, the Messiah, so that he could enter into that eternal life with Him, with all the rest who died in faith before the Messiah came.

When we die, if we are believers, we go to be with the Lord immediately!

Let me ask you a few questions here before we move on.

Isn't it easy to wonder how foolish, how immature, how sinful the children of Israel were during their wilderness wanderings, how they did not obey God?

It is very easy to point our finger at them and condemn them for their lack of faith. Think about all that they had. They had the Shekinah glory or the presence of God, a pillar of fire by night and a cloud by day to guide them, how could they not trust God?

If we are honest with ourselves, we do that all the time, not trusting in God!

Now we might argue, *"They had the glory of God to guide them!"*

That is very true, but we have the Spirit of God indwelling us and guiding us, so what is our excuse? We have none because we are no different than the children of Israel.

Remember that these lessons in the Bible are here for our learning that we might gain wisdom in the things that we are doing. Paul put it like this in Romans 15:4, **"For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope."**

The Amplified Bible puts this verse like this, **"For whatever was thus written in former days was written for our instruction, that by [our steadfast and patient] endurance and the encouragement [drawn] from the Scriptures we might hold fast to and cherish hope."**

Paul is speaking of the Old Testament and he is saying that what they went through, the lessons they learned were not only for them, but for us also! Their successes and their failures we can learn from just as we learn from our own successes and failures and others can learn from what we go through as well.

Let me give you a few examples from the Old Testament to show you what I mean.

Remember the story of Abraham and his nephew Lot. They were prosperous, their herds grew, and the land could not support them both.

And we read of this in Genesis 13:8-9 and notice what we are told, **“So Abram said to Lot, ‘Please let there be no strife between you and me, and between my herdsmen and your herdsmen; for we are brethren. Is not the whole land before you? Please separate from me. If you take the left, then I will go to the right; or, if you go to the right, then I will go to the left.’”**

Abram or Abraham as he will be called, had every right to the land, he was the elder and yet, he laid aside his liberty and his rights for the sake of his nephew.

What a lesson for us. Are we willing to lay down our rights and bless others? Or is it all about us? May we learn the lesson!

And in I Samuel chapter 18, the story of Jonathan, King Saul’s son and David illustrates this for us.

We are told in I Samuel 18:3-4, **“Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul. And Jonathan took off the robe that was on him and gave it to David, with his armor, even to his sword and his bow and his belt.”**

By the actions of Jonathan, he was telling David that he would be the next King in Israel and yet, by all rights it should have been Jonathan, but he willingly laid down his liberty and rights for the sake of David!

We also see this between David and King Saul. David had Saul all alone, in a cave and could have killed him and yet, we are told in I Samuel 24:10, **“Look, this day your eyes have seen that the Lord delivered you today into my hand in the cave, and someone urged me to kill you. But my eye spared you, and I said, ‘I will not stretch out my hand against my lord, for he is the Lord’s anointed.’”**

David could have killed Saul, but he laid down his liberty and rights and let Saul live!

And one more and that is of Moses and in Hebrews 11:24-26 we are told what he did.

Paul wrote, **“By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward.”**

In other words, he had the right to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter and yet he chose not to, to lay aside the liberties he had, the rights that he had, and he looked ahead to the reward!

These are men who were willing to lay aside their rightful positions and possessions.

You see, they could have demanded to have it their way, but they didn’t and in the end, they prospered because of it.

And Paul is saying to us that we need to learn from their example, to follow after them.

I am amazed at the number of pastors who don't teach out of the Old Testament and the number of Christians that don't read the Old Testament and yet, Paul says that in them you will find the examples of these men to encourage you and the end result as you go through the Scriptures is that you will have *PATIENCE, COMFORT* which then gives to you *HOPE!*

So we see – **THE CHALLENGE BY THE PHARISEES!**

And Jesus will answer the challenge that they made and speak to them about – **FATHER ABRAHAM!**

And I want you to notice how Jesus answers their question, “**Are You greater than our father Abraham, who is dead? And the prophets are dead. Whom do You make Yourself out to be?**” John 8:53.

Again, they were not listening to what Jesus was saying, that He is Almighty God, equal with God the Father!

So Jesus will tell them!

Let's read on and see how Jesus continues to answer this question.

VERSES 54-56

Now, before Jesus answered their question in John 8:53 He came back to the matter of spiritual parentage.

Jesus was secure in knowing that God was His Father, and “**. . . it is My Father who honors Me. . .**”

You see, the honor that Jesus received was not His own but comes from the Father who they do not know.

Now there are two different Greek words that are used here for “**know.**”

The first one is that Jesus knows the Father, and the Greek word is OIDA and it speaks of “*to know inherently or intuitively.*”

The only way Jesus can know the Father like that is that He was with the Father, and He was!

The other word we see here related to these religious leaders, as Jesus says, “**Yet you have not known Him**” and it is the Greek word GINOSKO which means “*to come to know by experience or observation.*”

You see, the Pharisees had all the information, the words of God, they had their experiences to go along with the Word of God, but they refused to see, they refused to know the truth!

Now Jesus kind of answered the question, showing that He was with the Father, hinting that He is God, but I think He fully answers their question from John 8:53 as we read on.

Listen again to what He says in John 8:56, “**Your father Abraham rejoiced to see Me day, and he saw it and was glad.**”

What I want you to see here is that Jesus claimed that not only was He greater than Abraham, but Abraham himself also acknowledged this.

Not only that but we are told that Abraham saw His day!

When did Abraham see Jesus?

It could be in Genesis chapter 12 when God promised to bless the nations of the world through the seed of Abraham and in Galatians 3:16 Paul picked up on this when he said, “**Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, ‘And to seeds,’ as of many, but as of one, ‘And to your Seed,’ who is Christ.**”

Or it could be from Genesis chapter 14 after Abraham rescued Lot and the King of Salem, Melchizedek went out to meet him and Abraham honored the King who was a type of Christ – Salem meaning peace and Melchizedek meaning righteousness, he was the King of Peace and Righteousness!

Or it could be when Abraham went to offer Isaac on Mount Moriah as a sacrifice in Genesis chapter 22, playing out what God the Father would do some 1,000 years later, on that same spot, by sacrificing His only begotten Son to pay the penalty for the sins of the world!

As Isaac was wondering where the lamb for the sacrifice was at, Abraham said, “**My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering.**” Genesis 22:8.

In other words, God did provide Himself as the sacrifice for our sins, the Lamb of God who came to take away the sins of the world!

I tend to believe that this was what Jesus was speaking of here in Genesis chapter 22, the others could fit as well, but I think this is His point.

You see, God said to Abraham to take his only son, but he had two, Ishmael and Isaac. But Ishmael was a son of the flesh and not of promise, it was Isaac that was the son of promise.

And they traveled three days to get to the spot, Mount Moriah. And there is so much more, and you can look at our Genesis studies because it is an amazing picture and thus, Abraham saw His day, and Abraham rejoiced!

So Jesus showed them – ***FATHER ABRAHAM!***

But how will they respond to what Jesus said to these Jewish religious leaders?

That is our next point – ***UNBELIEF BY THE PHARISEES!***

VERSE 57

Do you think these Pharisees had a hard time with what Jesus just said to Him?

You bet they did. Again, listen to what they said, **“You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?”**

We know that Jesus was in His thirties, so why did they say fifty?

One writer put it like this, *“Why fifty? That was the age at which the Levites retired from their service (Numbers 4:3). The Jews were saying to Jesus: ‘You are a young man, still in the prime of life, not even old enough to retire from service. How can you possibly have seen Abraham?’”* (Barclay)

Why did they feel that way?

It is simple, they were not listening to what Jesus was saying. That He is Almighty God, the Eternal One and thus, He knew of Abraham because Jesus is God!

And if they did not get the message yet. If they have not been listening to what Jesus was saying, then Jesus is going to make it perfectly clear, and I think that He got their attention as we will see.

But first, the next point – ***THE GREAT “I AM”!***

VERSE 58

I don’t think they wore socks in those days but if they did, the statement that Jesus just made, would have blown their socks off!

Notice again what Jesus said to them, **“Most assuredly I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM.”** John 8:58.

There is that *EGO EIMI* statement again. We see that phrase some twenty-three times in the Gospel of John! And here again we see that Jesus claimed to be that voice from the burning bush in Exodus chapter 3, the *All-Becoming One!*

Regarding these words of Jesus, Stauffer said, "*The phrase harbours within itself the most authentic, the most audacious, and the most profound affirmation by Jesus of who He was.*"

I totally agree!

Another writer wrote, "*Before Abraham came into existence I am, eternally existent. . . . No stronger affirmation of pre-existence occurs.*" (Dods)

And Bruce wrote, "*If Jesus' claim was not well founded, then his words were openly blasphemous: he was using language that only God could use.*"

Now some people and some cults claim that Jesus never claimed to be God.

How foolish that is. You see, in this chapter alone Jesus claimed to be the Great *I AM* some three times!

Then why don't they see this?

Because they suppress the truth to believe what they want to believe and I have dealt with people who have felt this way and it doesn't matter how many Scriptures you show them, they reject the fact that Jesus is God! It is willful, they refuse to see!

Ray Stedman put it like this,

The striking thing is that Jesus is forcing this issue upon these men. He does not placate them; he does not try to compromise with them or calm them down.

In fact, he enrages them deliberately, again and again, claiming things that they cannot accept and which only make them more angry and determined to get rid of him.

He does not temper his language. On the contrary, he hits harder and harder each time, each claim more staggering than the one preceding it.

He drove them to action, he forced a decision until, threatened and angry and filled with rage, they stooped down and took up stones - in all probability stones lying there for the construction of the temple - and they attempted to stone him.

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For those who try to deny the fact that Jesus claimed to be God, at least the Jewish religious leaders were honest about this. How do I know?

Let's read on and see.

I have called this verse – ***I THINK THEY ARE UPSET – BUT WHY?***

VERSE 59

Let me ask you this question. Why did they want to kill Jesus?

Because He being a man claimed to be equal with God. They knew exactly what Jesus was saying and the penalty for claiming to be God was stoning!

But He was not lying, He is God!

They wanted to stone Him, and Jesus disappears in the crowd. They could not touch Him, not yet because His time had not yet come!

Again, Ray Stedman put it like this,

Notice what Jesus did next. Hollywood would enact this scene by having Jesus leap into the sky like Superman and suddenly disappear into the heavens; or grab a sword and cut them to pieces, like Captain Zorro; or simply vanish, like the Invisible Man; or zap them with rockets, like Luke Skywalker. But Jesus does none of these things. According to the text, he “hid himself.”

He merely stepped down off a slightly raised platform and disappeared into the crowd and was lost to sight. Once again, as we have seen all through this section, the invisible hand of God is at work, protecting him until his time has come.

This is one of the most encouraging things about our Lord in his earthly life. How confident he is that men cannot lay a finger on him until his time had come.

It gives him courage, it makes him brave to say what he needs to say because he knows they cannot touch him until the hour comes. It does not mean, of course, that there is not coming a time when they can destroy him. He will be delivered into their hands. He knows that.

We can take great encouragement from this. When we are walking in the Lord’s will, saying what he wants us to say and living as he wants us to live, we too are supported by an invisible hand.

We have an invisible shield about us, a ministry of angels on our behalf, and until God’s hour strikes, nothing can get through that shield; nothing can touch us.

If something does get through, it is because God’s hour has struck. He is using that for his purpose, and we can accept it on that basis. This is the way Jesus lived, and this is the way he invites us to live in this [twenty-first] century hour as well.

May we truly understand that and then walk by faith. God is in control and His hand is upon our lives!

Let me close with this for you to think about.

Tragically, the light, the ***SHEKINAH*** glory that had been absent from the Temple for some several hundred years had returned in Jesus but now He departs once again from the Temple leaving them in spiritual darkness because they refused to come to the light, come to Jesus! They refused to listen and believe!

What about you?