

45 John 8:48-59

Before Abraham, I Am! (PM)

REVIEW / INTRODUCTION

Last week we heard the account of Jesus debating with a Jewish audience, some of whom were dismissive and insulting, even insinuating that Jesus was of the devil. Jesus replied that it was not He who had a demon but they were of the devil. His accusers wanted to kill Him and those who kill without cause are influenced of the devil. They lied and misrepresented His words and deeds, and those who lie are influenced by the devil, aka Father of Lies.

Verse 48 picks up with their response.

READING THE TEXT

⁴⁸ The Jews answered him, “Are we not right in saying 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 Yet I do not seek my own glory; there is One who seeks it, and he is the judge. ⁵¹ Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps my

word, he will never see death.” ⁵² 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.’” ⁵³ Are you greater than our father Abraham, who died? And the prophets died! Who do you make yourself out to be?”

⁵⁴ Jesus answered, “If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing. It is my Father who glorifies me, of whom you say, ‘He is our God.’” ⁵⁵ 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. ⁵⁶ Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad.” ⁵⁷ So the Jews said to him, “You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?” ⁵⁸ Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.” ⁵⁹ So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple.

PREACHING THE TEXT

⁴⁸ The Jews answered him, “Are we not right in saying that you are a Samaritan and have a demon?”

The Jewish people had been praying for the appearing of the Savior for hundreds of years. They looked forward to a Messiah who would come and fix their problems and save their holy nation.

But what happens to any of us when we pray for God to straighten things out and then He does but He does not do it the way we thought of doing it. Or what if He does not use the people we approve of to fix our broken family, or school or church?

Jesus was God’s answer to fix Israel and more than that to fix the sin problem for the whole world. But His methods were not what we would have done. His appearance did not live up to our approval. He did not use the right bible. He ate and drank things that I forbid in my house. Forget this guy. He even hung around people that can't possibly be loved by God.

So they did what most of us do when God's answer comes in a form that we did not expect and which actually confronts our values and our lack of love and depth of understanding. We switch into black and white thinking and demonize the person that is hooking our shame or confronting our false view of reality. They start listing reasons they are good or better. They are into this for a win / lose solution. They want to win and they want Jesus, The Messiah to get out of their way and stop challenging their faith and life.

So they pulled the Abraham card. *Jesus, do you know what family I come from?! I'm well respected and have powerful friends. Im related to Abraham and he was close to God so i'm sure that i'm all set with God. But Jesus, you have spent a lot of time with people in Samaria who were not raised in the faith and not related to Abraham. You must have picked up a demon by hanging around all those ghastly unclean people.*

⁴⁹ **Jesus answered,**

“I do not have a demon,
but I honor my Father,
and you dishonor me.

Jesus answered their accusation directly; *I do not have a demon*, He said. One of the ways that you can know you might have a demon is if you act like Satan. If you lie and steal and hate and desire to kill and you act divisive pitting people against one another, then you might have a demon.

But if you are living a life that honors the Father you can be fairly confident that you are not being controlled by demons.

The false accusations and slander of this crowd means that they have set themselves against someone that God is for.

Who would be against those who God is blessing? It did not turn out well for those who opposed Elijah on Mount Carmel. It did not turn out well for those who opposed David, the King whom God blessed. It did not

turn out well for the sorcerer who opposed Paul on the island of Crete. But jealousy will tempt each one of us to do foolish things, like set yourself against someone who God is for.

We might set ourselves against someone who does not have the same beliefs as we do about some minor doctrine or personal conviction. But if that person is a believer and is seeking to honor God in their life then we are fighting someone in whom God has put His Spirit.

STORY - GOD'S ANSWER / MY ENEMY

I recall when I was young and inexperienced in ministry. As you may have guessed I have a temperament that wants to be in charge of things. But that is not a good idea when you are young and stupid. So I was working at a megachurch when the position of executive pastor was created. I was already managing the office, prayer teams, visitation, and small groups. So I thought I could do a great job.

But the church had other ideas. They hired someone else to be the executive pastor. I acted real nice and humble on the outside, but I have to tell you that on the inside I was jealous. And when someone said something negative about the new executive pastor I was tempted to jump in and pile on and make her job more difficult. She had experience, and used tools that I never heard of. But for some reason i thought I knew better and I should be in charge.

Jealousy had hooked my soul and I was set against someone in whom the Spirit of God lived and who God was for and was blessing.

That is what happens when we let our pride take over. We set ourselves against the very person that God has called and who is producing kingdom fruit. And unwittingly we have set ourselves against God and His plans. And it all came from pride and a sense of entitlement.

In this text not only do some in this crowd set themselves against someone that God is for. They are

setting themselves against God-the second person of the Trinity.

Jesus continues...

⁵⁰ Yet I do not seek my own glory;

there is One who seeks it, and he is the judge.

⁵¹ Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death.”

Jesus is not driven by arrogance and jealousy. He is not influenced by temptations to steal and kill. His motive is to put a spotlight on the glory of God The Father. Jesus points out His pure motives and then He calls people to obey Him and follow Him. He sets out the reward for following Him; ***“if anyone keeps my word he will never see death.”***

Some in this crowd did not believe in the resurrection of the dead. It sounds goofy but it is true, the Sadducees taught there was no resurrection of the dead. So when Jesus promised His followers that they would never die,

He was promising something that they did not think was possible.

That is why they responded to Jesus this way;

⁵² 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.’ ⁵³ Are you greater than our father Abraham, who died? And the prophets died! Who do you make yourself out to be?”

So they are not imagining that Abraham still lives in the presence of God in heaven. They think that Jesus is promising the fountain of youth so that people will live physically forever. Poor theology really matters. They have no concept of eternal life including a period of time when we are absent from the body but present with The Lord.

⁵⁴ Jesus answered, “If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing. It is my Father who glorifies me, of whom you say, ‘He is our God.’

Jesus is saying that if He were a braggart with a weak ego then He would not be trustworthy. But just as He seeks to bring glory to the Father, the Father also seeks to highlight the glory of His Son, Jesus Christ.

The very one they claim to know is actually for Jesus. This was proven when God's power was available for Jesus to do miracles that only God could do.

⁵⁵ 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.

We are at an impasse. There are some who have so much pride that they are unteachable. There will be an impasse between Jesus and those who want to come up with their own theology and who want to live for their own glory rather than God's.

Now watch Jesus play the ultimate trump card on those who took pride that they were a distant relative of Abraham.

⁵⁶ Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad.”

In other words, you take such pride in being related to Abraham. But I actually know Abraham. I spent time with Abraham and He was glad to see me. If you are so into Abraham then why do you not also love the one who Abraham loved?

⁵⁷ So the Jews said to him, “You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?”

You can see how their bad theology limits their world view. Here is the response of Jesus which is one of the most powerful sentences in scripture for understanding the true identity of Jesus.

⁵⁸ Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.”

Not only did Jesus claim to be old enough to be alive when Abraham lived. He claimed the title of God. The words; **I Am** is a reference to the holy name of God. Jesus

is using the same title for Himself that He used in the Old Testament when He appeared to Moses.

Exodus 3:14 esv

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.’”

JESUS IN OLD TESTAMENT

Some of us have never thought through about what Jesus must have been up to before He came in the flesh. So let's take a quick overview of some times that Jesus appeared in the Old Testament before He took on a human body and nature through the virgin birth.

Jesus Christ is called The Word of God. The Word was the being in the God family who served as the spokesman. He has always been responsible for communicating the will of the Father to human beings—during Old Testament and New Testament times. So when you read about God appearing or speaking in the

Old or New Testament it is a good bet that you are reading about Jesus, The Son of God.

Also, when you see the word Angel of The Lord, it is a reference to Jesus, The Son of God. Of the 214 usages of the Hebrew term used for “angel,” about one-third of them refer to an appearance of Christ in the Old Testament. Let’s look at a few passages.

Genesis 12:7 (ESV)

7 Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, “To your offspring I will give this land.” So he built there an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him.

Genesis 16:7-14 esv

7 The angel of the LORD found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, the spring on the way to Shur. 8 And he said, “Hagar, servant of Sarai, where have you come from and where are you going?” She said, “I am fleeing from my mistress Sarai.” 9 The angel of the LORD said to her, “Return to your mistress

and submit to her.” 10 The angel of the LORD also said to her, “I will surely multiply your offspring so that they cannot be numbered for multitude.” 11 And the angel of the LORD said to her,

“Behold, you are pregnant
and shall bear a son.

You shall call his name Ishmael,
because the LORD has listened to your affliction.

Genesis 17:1 (ESV)

17 When Abram was ninety-nine years old the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, “I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless,

Genesis 22:11 (ESV)

11 But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, “Abraham, Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.”

15 And the angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven. 16 and said, “By myself I

*have sworn, declares **the LORD**, because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, 17 I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring ...*

Exodus 3:2 (ESV)

*² And the **angel of the LORD** appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. He looked, and behold, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed.*

----- END JESUS IN OLD TESTAMENT

Jesus used the title; I Am indicating that He was God. And as you can see from the Old Testament passages, Jesus did know Abraham. Jesus The Son of God has always been God. He has always been active in the affairs of mankind. He was claiming to be the God who lives above the arch of time, space and matter. Here is their response.

⁵⁹ So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple.

Many people have said to me, if only God showed up right in front of me I would believe. I do not think that is true. Here was God almighty in the flesh right in front of a crowd of hundreds and what was their response? The issue is not whether God appears in the flesh. What really matters is that you have faith to live your life to the glory of God's Son.

SUMMARY

Jesus is the Great I Am. That means that He has the power and authority to hold together the universe. He has the power and authority to hold together your life and speak into your circumstances. He has the power and authority to speak into your insecurities and fears. He has the power and authority to save you and keep you and heal you and use you. He knows you and loves you and He is the Great I Am!

TAKING IT HOME

1. Have you found yourself opposing those whom God is blessing? If so, what did God do to wake you up?
2. Did you realize that Jesus Christ has always been God. He speaks and acts for the Trinity and is worthy of our worship?
3. What are some times that pride overcame you and you began to rely on knowing the right people or coming from the right family?
4. How is God calling you to embrace, adore and worship His Son today?