

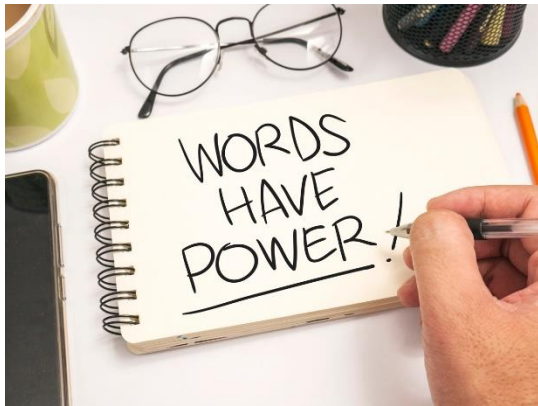
## The Father Glorifies the Son?

### John 8:48-58

Online Sermon:

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Language serves as a crucial medium for interpersonal communication. Verbal expression has the power to evoke vivid images of the beauty in our surroundings, motivate us to achieve remarkable feats, and ignite transformations in our passions, goals, and dreams. When two completely opposing perspectives collide,

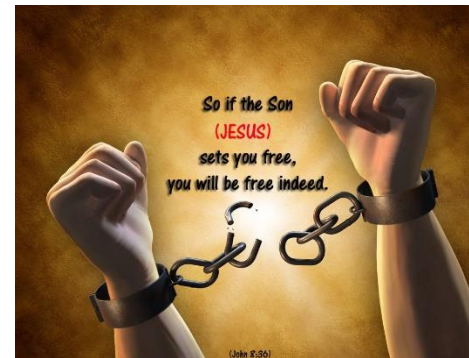


intense emotions are kindled, sparks ensue, and passionate words of debate are exchanged. Jesus engaged a discussion with His own people concerning His identity as God's

one and only Son not to incite their anger toward Him, but rather to unveil their sin, providing them with an opportunity to repent. For instance, earlier in their discussions Jesus had told them, "For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him" (3:17). Also, Jesus

arrived to offer His life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45), reflecting God the Father's desire that none should perish (2 Peter 3:9).

Before delving into John 8:48-59, let's turn our attention in our Bibles to the preceding discourse (8:31-47) to grasp the context of the ongoing discussion. Jesus' proclamation to the Jewish community, "If you hold to My teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (8:31), initiated a spirited debate that has endured for centuries. The bold assertion from Jesus, stating that mere



descent from Abraham didn't guarantee entry into heaven, sparked profound offense. He elaborated, emphasizing that they were enslaved by sin, and consequently, lacked a place in God's kingdom (8:35-38). In vehement

objection, the Jews passionately claimed God's lineage through Abraham as their father. Jesus countered, suggesting that if they truly were God's children, they would embrace His teachings, as Abraham did (8:39), given that His words emanated from God the Father in heaven. This declaration further infuriated the Jewish community, especially when Christ asserted the uncomfortable truth that their rejection of His teachings identified their spiritual parentage with the devil, the original deceiver (8:42-47). As we now turn to John 8:48-59, we'll observe how Jesus responded to the Jewish accusations of being

a Samaritan and demon possessed. He countered by affirming the truth that the Father glorifies the Son, who existed long before Abraham.

## Accusation#1: You are a Samaritan and Demon Possessed

After their theological discussion, which revolved around the belief that being descendants of Abraham automatically conferred upon them the status of children in God's kingdom, the Jews shifted their focus to engaging in personal insults and verbal abuse.<sup>1</sup> First, they accused Jesus of being a Samaritan, one of their most hated of all neighbours!<sup>2</sup> Following the collapse of the northern kingdom in 722 BC, the Assyrians not only displaced numerous Israelites but also resettled people of various nationalities to cultivate their lands.<sup>3</sup> The intermarriage of both Jews and Gentiles gave birth to a new

people, the Samaritans.<sup>4</sup> The animosity of the Jewish people towards this new community stemmed from several reasons: their practice of worshiping both God and other deities,<sup>5</sup> the selection of Mount Gerizim rather than Jerusalem as their sacred



temple site,<sup>6</sup> their association with magical practices,<sup>7</sup> and their acknowledgment of only the first five books of the

Bible.<sup>8</sup> The disdain for Samaritans was so profound that any form of social interaction or marriage between the two groups was strictly prohibited.<sup>9</sup> To call Jesus a Samaritan was the highest of insult for any Jew to bear. The Jews' second accusation against Jesus centered on the claim that He was demon-possessed. This grave allegation was likely aimed at

<sup>1</sup> D. A. Carson, [The Gospel according to John](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans, 1991), 354.

<sup>2</sup> H. D. M. Spence-Jones, ed., [St. John](#), vol. 1, The Pulpit Commentary (London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1909), 369.

<sup>3</sup> Andreas J. Köstenberger, ["Samaritans,"](#) in *The Baker Illustrated Bible Background Commentary*, ed. J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2020), 780.

<sup>4</sup> Robert T. Anderson, ["Samaritans,"](#) ed. David Noel Freedman, *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 941.

<sup>5</sup> Tremper Longman III, Peter Enns, and Mark Strauss, eds., [The Baker Illustrated Bible Dictionary](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2013), 1470.

<sup>6</sup> Andreas J. Köstenberger, ["Samaritans,"](#) in *The Baker Illustrated Bible Background Commentary*, ed. J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2020), 780.

<sup>7</sup> George R. Beasley-Murray, [John](#), vol. 36, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1999), 136.

<sup>8</sup> Andreas J. Köstenberger, ["Samaritans,"](#) in *The Baker Illustrated Bible Background Commentary*, ed. J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2020), 781.

<sup>9</sup> Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel, ["Samaritans,"](#) *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 1887.

undermining Jesus' prophetic authority<sup>10</sup> and refuting any notion of Him being the Messiah. Matthew recounts another episode where the Pharisees accused Jesus of performing miracles through the influence of Beelzebul, the prince of demons (Matthew 12:22-28). The irony is palpable as those referred to as "children of hell" in Matthew 23:15 accused the Lord of drawing power from their master.

**Reflection.** How sad it is that when a person caught in sin resorts to character assassination rather than repentance! Have you ever argued with someone and got you so angry that you started to call them names? Ever wonder how God feels when you say you love Him but do not love those created in His image?

## Response#1: God will Judge, Obey Me and not Die

In response to their accusation Jesus states His teachings and miracles are “not the fruit of arrogance, dementia,

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<sup>10</sup> Craig S. Keener, [John](#), ed. Clinton E. Arnold, vol. 2A, Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2019), 90.

<sup>11</sup> D. A. Carson, [The Gospel according to John](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans, 1991), 355.

<sup>12</sup> James Montgomery Boice, [The Gospel of John: An Expository Commentary](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005), 657.

<sup>13</sup> H. D. M. Spence-Jones, ed., [St. John](#), vol. 1, The Pulpit Commentary (London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1909), 369.

Samaritanism or the occult, but simply obedience to the Father.”<sup>11</sup> The Devil, though he be real and not a figment of one’s imagination like many today believe,<sup>12</sup> was not haunting or possessing Christ’s mind and will!<sup>13</sup> Jesus’ response to the Jews accusation likely depicts a court scene in which both He



and the Jews are standing before the Father.<sup>14</sup> Jesus warns them that the Father who has absolute power and infinite knowledge<sup>15</sup> has already judged the works of the Son and

found them righteous because they are in perfect unison with the Father’s will. Jesus does not require endorsement or acclaim from the Jewish people, as that recognition has already been granted to Him by the Father. The assertion made by the Jews that Jesus is demon-possessed is unfounded, for both Christ and the Father attest to the contrary!<sup>16</sup> Jesus warns the Jewish people, in love, that in rejecting His teachings will lead to their condemnation. If they truly lived in accordance with God's will,

<sup>14</sup> George R. Beasley-Murray, [John](#), vol. 36, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1999), 136–137.

<sup>15</sup> H. D. M. Spence-Jones, ed., [St. John](#), vol. 1, The Pulpit Commentary (London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1909), 370.

<sup>16</sup> Leon Morris, [The Gospel according to John](#), The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1995), 414–415.

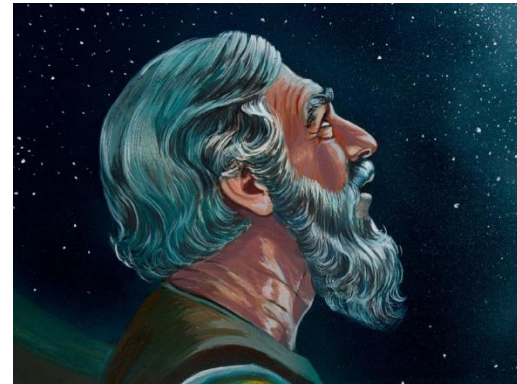
as they professed, they would embrace the teachings of God's only Son. However, since they rejected His words, they have turned away from the sole path, truth, and life that leads to salvation (John 14:6, 3:16)! Although the separation of the soul from the body, known as physical death, is a cause of great fear for many, spiritual death stands out as the most formidable source of terror. While physical death, the separation of the soul from the body, is not feared, spiritual death is the greatest source of terror. God has implanted eternity in one's heart (Ecclesiastes 3:11) to prompt the search for God, who is always near (Isaiah 55:6-7). The author of Hebrews emphasizes that everyone is destined to die once and then face judgment (9:27-28). Jesus informs the Jewish people that those with faith in Him and who follow His teachings will experience eternal life with the Father in heaven. However, He warns that those who reject Him are also rejecting the Father who sent Him and at harvest time will be bundled together and burned (Matthew 13:24-30).

## Accusation#2: Are you Greater than our Father Abraham?

In round two the Jewish people double down on their accusation that Jesus must be demon possessed to make the claim “whoever obeys My word will never see death.” Taking Jesus’ reference to death as being “literal, i.e. physical death,<sup>17</sup> they claimed His statement was heretical and from a demon.

<sup>17</sup> Craig S. Keener, [The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament](#) (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), Jn 8:51–53.

Even with the passing of Abraham, the progenitor of the Jewish race, who received the divine promise from God that his name would be the source of a great nation and a blessing to all people on earth, and despite his obedience to God's call to journey to an unknown land and even to offer his son Isaac on an altar (Genesis 12:1-2, 22:6-14, 25:7-11), he eventually experienced



physical death. Although Jeremiah faithfully obeyed God, shedding tears over the nation while delivering messages of impending judgment, he eventually faced physical death. Similarly, Ezekiel, in

obedience to God, symbolically cooked his food over cow dung to illustrate the people of Judah consuming defiled food in exile.<sup>18</sup> Additionally, he lay on his side for a duration corresponding to the years of sin committed by Israel and Judah (Chapter 4), yet, like others, he too eventually passed away. If adhering to Jesus' directives ensures eternal life, does this not imply that Christ is asserting superiority over Abraham and the

<sup>18</sup> Tremper Longman III, Peter Enns, and Mark Strauss, eds., [The Baker Illustrated Bible Dictionary](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2013), 553.



prophets?<sup>19</sup> In a confrontational and hostile manner,<sup>20</sup> they challenge Jesus, demanding, "Who do you think you are?"

## Response#2: God Glorifies Me

Jesus responded to the Jews that His identity was securely found in the Father's testimony about His glory. The teachers of Jesus' day taught against "any self-exaltation, especially that could be construed as exaltation above the Torah."<sup>21</sup> Jesus agreed with them that any attempt for Him to glorify Himself would be useless in their sight.<sup>22</sup> The Father, whom the Jews professed as their God, was the one responsible for glorifying Him. This notion perplexed them because their lack of understanding prevented them from truly knowing God. The history of the Jewish people was marked by the unfortunate trend of putting many prophets to death, oblivious to the divine origin of their messages. Despite their professed belief in God, the Jews failed to recognize the fulfillment of the messianic era in Jesus, the Son.<sup>23</sup> Even their revered rabbis, like Abraham with his prophetic insight,<sup>24</sup> should have anticipated and rejoiced in the

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<sup>19</sup> Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to John*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1995), 416.

<sup>20</sup> Gary M. Burge, "[Gospel of John](#)," in *John's Gospel, Hebrews–Revelation*, ed. Craig A. Evans and Craig A. Bubeck, First Edition., The Bible Knowledge Background Commentary (Colorado Springs, CO; Paris, ON; Eastbourne: David C Cook, 2005), 89.

<sup>21</sup> Craig S. Keener, *John*, ed. Clinton E. Arnold, vol. 2A, Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2019), 90–91.

<sup>22</sup> George R. Beasley-Murray, *John*, vol. 36, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1999), 137.

arrival of the Messiah, who would sacrificially offer His life for many. It is puzzling why some among them reacted with anger and bitterness, accusing Jesus of being demon-possessed. Jesus, however, was merely embodying the word and will of God, whom they claimed as the ultimate authority and sustainer of life.<sup>25</sup> The



disconnect between their beliefs and their response to Jesus raises questions about the authenticity of their faith. The religious elite, particularly the Pharisees, drew criticism for self-glorification. Their public displays of piety,

characterized by eloquent prayers and conspicuous attire, lacked genuine heart connection. Jesus condemned them, likening them to "whitewashed tombs" that outwardly appeared beautiful but concealed inner impurity (Matthew 23:27). In contrast, God's mode of glorifying Jesus through self-sacrifice in a shameful death stood in stark opposition to self-glorification. This divine act, far removed

<sup>23</sup> Gary M. Burge, "[Gospel of John](#)," in *John's Gospel, Hebrews–Revelation*, ed. Craig A. Evans and Craig A. Bubeck, First Edition., The Bible Knowledge Background Commentary (Colorado Springs, CO; Paris, ON; Eastbourne: David C Cook, 2005), 90.

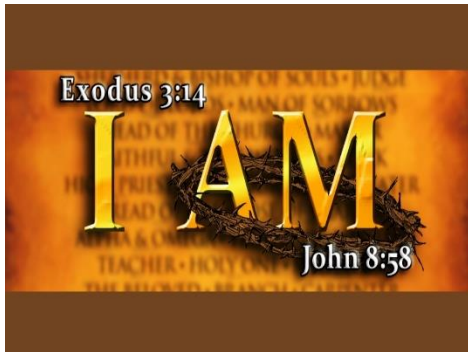
<sup>24</sup> Gary M. Burge, "[Gospel of John](#)," in *John's Gospel, Hebrews–Revelation*, ed. Craig A. Evans and Craig A. Bubeck, First Edition., The Bible Knowledge Background Commentary (Colorado Springs, CO; Paris, ON; Eastbourne: David C Cook, 2005), 90.

<sup>25</sup> Gary M. Burge, "[Gospel of John](#)," in *John's Gospel, Hebrews–Revelation*, ed. Craig A. Evans and Craig A. Bubeck, First Edition., The Bible Knowledge Background Commentary (Colorado Springs, CO; Paris, ON; Eastbourne: David C Cook, 2005), 89–90.

from human vanity, exemplifies the stark contrast between heavenly virtue and the depths of spiritual decay. The inability of the Jews to comprehend Jesus' teachings stems from their lack of knowledge of God, preventing them from recognizing the Son in their midst.

### Accusation and Response #3: You are Older than Abraham?

The Jewish people finish with one final accusation, “You are not yet fifty years old, and you seen Abraham,” to which



Christ replied, “Very truly I tell you, before Abraham was born, I am.” When two these two completely opposing perspectives collided, intense emotions were kindled, and sparks happened like lightning!

If Christ had asserted to be the Messiah, it might have triggered resentment. However,

declaring to have encountered Father Abraham, who had been deceased for nearly 2,000 years,<sup>26</sup> was profoundly offensive to them as it implied a claim to deity.<sup>27</sup> John initiated his Prologue by affirming the Word's existence even before the inception of time, a characteristic solely applicable to God Himself. Was Jesus truly asserting to be the ancient figure mentioned in Isaiah 43:13 and Psalms 90:42, Israel's exclusive Savior?<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, was Jesus employing the divine "I am" title from Exodus 3:14?<sup>29</sup> These implicit affirmations proved too burdensome for the people, leading them to pick up stones for stoning, a punishment in line with the Old Testament's condemnation of blasphemy (Leviticus 24:16, Deuteronomy 13:6-11).<sup>30</sup> Nonetheless, Jesus eluded their grasp and withdrew, as the appointed time had not yet arrived (John 7:30, 44, 8:20, 18:6).<sup>31</sup>

### Conclusion

We have just heard an exchange of words that were incredibly passionate! In love Jesus was trying to explain to His own that having Abraham as their father did not guarantee their

<sup>26</sup> Matt Carter and Josh Wredberg, *Exalting Jesus in John* (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2017), 204.

<sup>27</sup> Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), Jn 8:59.

<sup>28</sup> D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans, 1991), 358.

<sup>29</sup> Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), Jn 8:57–58.

<sup>30</sup> Andreas J. Köstenberger, “John,” in *The Baker Illustrated Bible Background Commentary*, ed. J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2020), 974.

<sup>31</sup> Gary M. Burge, “Gospel of John,” in *John’s Gospel, Hebrews–Revelation*, ed. Craig A. Evans and Craig A. Bubeck, First Edition., The Bible Knowledge Background Commentary (Colorado Springs, CO; Paris, ON; Eastbourne: David C Cook, 2005), 90.

entrance into heaven. It was through belief in Christ's words that were given to Him by the Father that one would become part of God's kingdom. Christmas is vastly approaching and while many who hear the words of the Messiah will either be indifferent or outright enraged by His teachings, we still need to spread the Good News to the world! God sent His one and only Son, who pre-existed before time began because He is God, to be a ransom for the sins of the many. The present God wants to give to the world has already been opened and is a historical fact. Christ emptied Himself, was born in a manger, preached the Good News, and voluntarily chose to die on a cross so that He would pay the penalty of our sins. Everyone is offered this gift and no one is beyond salvation, for Christ died once and for everyone! So, despite the truth that many will be like the God's own in this story and passionately reject and even be angry towards you for saying the name Christ at Christmas, fulfill your duties as His ambassador and royal priest and boldly tell the world the Father's desire has been and always will be that they might have faith in His Son so that none of them might perish!