

Jesus, the Great I AM
John 8:48-59

July 17, 2016

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^A 1 Corinthians 2:8; Acts 7:51; Matthew 12:31; John 5:41, 7:18, 12:28

^B Acts 3:15; Matthew 22:29-32

^C 1 Timothy 1:17; Hebrews 11:10, 13; Exodus 3:14

^D John 20:31

A. Introduction

1. The Dialogue Continues

- a. this dialogue began back in verse 12 when Jesus declared Himself to be the Light of the world
 - (A) He has been speaking in the temple, near the Treasury, in what was called the Court of the Women, an area open to all Jews
 - (B) it was, therefore, a mixed crowd that gathered before Him as He was teaching: some being disciples, some being interested and open to what He was saying, some being strongly antagonistic
- b. in the gospel of John this opposition is frequently called 'the Jews '
 - (A) it was made up of the Jewish religious rulers
 - (B) being the priests, belonging to the party of the Sadducees
 - (C) the scribes, or religious lawyers
 - (D) and the Pharisees, being their main spokesmen
- c. it is with these Pharisees that Jesus is mainly engaged in dialogue in this chapter

2. What Were Their Motives?

- a. as religious leaders of God's people they should have been overjoyed at having with them 'a teacher come from God'
 - (A) instead they disputed with Jesus at every opportunity
 - (B) this Jesus was usurping their religious authority
 - (C) His popularity threatened their civil authority
 - (D) they did not want any Messiah to unsettle their prosperity
- b. why could they not listen and learn from Jesus' teaching?
 - (A) Jesus told them what was wrong in verse 47
 - (B) "He who is of God hears the words of God; for this reason you do not hear them, because you are not of God." (John 8:47)
 - (C) the verses that follow bear out Jesus' words
 - (D) like the rulers, priests & false prophets of the times of the OT prophets, they did not recognise God's words, because their motives were wrapped up in their own selves, not in God

3. Our Objective

a. in contrast to their motives, is to affirm these words as ours:

I love to tell the story
Of unseen things above
Of Jesus and His glory
Of Jesus and His love —{2}.

b. to do so, let us consider how Jesus' opponents

- (A) dishonoured the Lord of glory
- (B) disbelieved the Lord of life
- (C) dismissed the Lord of eternity

B. Dishonouring the Lord of Glory 8:48-50

a. "the wisdom which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they had understood it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory;" (1 Corinthians 2:8)

2. Their Thoughts (48)

a. 'The Jews answered and said to Him, "Do we not say rightly that You are a Samaritan and have a demon?"'

b. how could this Jesus say that these oh so righteous rulers did not know God? ... that they did not hear God's words?

- (A) rather than listen to this they strike back with invective
- (B) not knowing that in insulting the Son they insulted the Father

c. their words are brutal and cutting

- (A) **do we not say** – theirs is not a one time statement but how they were talking about Jesus among themselves
- (B) **you are a Samaritan** – though a Jew, though a teacher come from God, they considered Him no better than those half heathens
- (C) **and have a demon** – His words are not from God but from Satan

(1) of such men Stephen at his martyrdom would say, "You men who are stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears are always resisting the Holy Spirit; you are doing just as your fathers did." (Acts 7:51)

- (2) and so endangered their own souls: "Therefore I say to you, any sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven men, but blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven." (Matthew 12:31)

3. God's Thoughts (49-50)

- a. "Jesus answered, "I do not have a demon; but I honour My Father, and you dishonour Me. But I do not seek My glory; there is One who seeks and judges.""
- b. Jesus ignores the Samaritan slur, knowing that there were those among the Samaritans far closer to God than these men
- c. that these murderous, self-centred rulers should call God their Father cannot be left unchallenged: for Jesus to honour His Father, He must stand up against such a lie and dishonour to the Father
- d. yes, they can insult and dishonour Him, but Jesus need not mount a defence of His own honour
 - (A) "I do not receive glory from men;" (John 5:41) for it means little
 - (B) "He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but He who is seeking the glory of the One who sent Him, He is true, and there is no unrighteousness in Him." (John 7:18) He will speak from God
 - (C) and His honour & glory does not rest upon their opinion, but rather on the Father who judges rightly, who will answer His Son,
 - (D) "Father, glorify Thy name." There came therefore a voice out of heaven: "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again." (Jn 12:28)

C. Disbelieving the Lord of Life 8:51-55

- a. "but put to death the Prince of life, the one whom God raised from the dead, a fact to which we are witnesses." (Acts 3:15)

2. Jesus' Words of Life (51)

- a. "Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he shall never see death."
- b. with these words, the opposition can never claim not to have heard the gospel: for that is what Jesus' word is
- c. there are three things involved in keeping His word
 - (A) accepting it as the truth through faith: believing Him
 - (B) obeying that word as the instruction for life
 - (C) defending that word against any who deny it
- d. Jesus defends not His personal honour before these opponents, but as part of His honouring His Father, He defends the gospel message of life, for it is the message given to Him by the Father

3. Their Words of Disbelief (52-53)

- a. 'The Jews said to Him, "Now we know that You have a demon. Abraham died, and the prophets also; and You say, 'If anyone keeps My word, he shall never taste of death.' Surely You are not greater than our father Abraham, who died? The prophets died too; whom do You make Yourself out to be?'"
- b. how often Jesus' enemies pick at the literal meaning of His words, ignoring the obvious spiritual meaning in their wilfulness and hatred
 - (A) their thoughts are of earth, from below, and their whole existence is wrapped up in the here and now
 - (B) with sarcasm they point out Abraham is dead, the prophets are dead; who does this Jesus think that He is?
- c. but of course Jesus is speaking of the real life, the spiritual one
 - (A) for Abraham in spiritual terms is not dead
 - (B) in about six months Jesus would make that point to some of these his opponents when they question the resurrection
 - (C) 'But Jesus answered and said to them, "You are mistaken, not understanding the Scriptures, ... that which was spoken to you by God, saying, 'I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is not the God of the dead but of the living.'" (Matthew 22:29-32)

4. Jesus' Words Are from God (54-55)

- a. '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'; and you have not come to know Him, but I know Him; and if I say that I do not know Him, I shall be a liar like you, but I do know Him, and keep His word.'"
- b. Jesus does not lower Himself to their level, by pointing out that even on the purely physical level where were two prophets who did not see death: Enoch and Elijah – this was not really pertinent
- c. the spiritual, eternal life of which He speaks is that continuing, eternal relationship between our eternal spirit and eternal God
 - (A) that is what the expression "knowing God" conveys
 - (B) it is not just knowing about God, the ability to describe Him in His many perfections and glories
 - (C) but it is that personal experience of recognising Him, of being acquainted with Him – it is intimacy with God as opposed to observation.
- d. Jesus and His opponents are poles apart in the matter of truth
 - (A) they boastfully claim God as their own, their possession as it were by their self-righteous position in

Judaism – but that is a lie

- (B) Jesus will not soften His words to them about His own knowing God – for to do so would be a lie; He knows the Father eternally

D. Dismissing the Lord of Eternity 8:56-59

- a. "Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honour and glory forever and ever. Amen." (1 Timothy 1:17)

2. Jesus and Abraham (56)

- a. "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad."
- b. it is not clear in the English, but in the original it is very clear that 'Abraham rejoiced' in anticipation of the seeing the day of Jesus, the Messiah, the Son of God
 - (A) it was part of Abraham's faith journey
 - (B) "for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God." (Hebrews 11:10)
 - (C) "All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth." (Hebrews 11:13)
 - (D) Abraham exulted – bubbled over with joy – in that anticipation
- c. 'and he saw' – there came a time when that anticipation was fulfilled – Abraham saw the day of Jesus, the Messiah, Son of God arrived
 - (A) was it meeting the Lord on the plains of Mamre?
 - (B) was it in Abraham's visions?
 - (C) was it at the birth of Isaac which provoked joyous laughter?
 - (D) was it when Isaac was delivered by the ram caught in the thicket?
 - (E) Jesus does not say, but Abrahams' faith was rewarded

3. Their Scorn (57)

- a. 'The Jews therefore said to Him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?"'
- b. again they interpret Jesus words on the physical level
- c. Jesus is young – fifty was the retirement age for Levites – how can he ever have met Abraham?
- d. the underlying answer is to be found in ...

4. Jesus' Eternity (58-59)

- a. 'Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am." Therefore they picked up stones to throw at Him; but Jesus hid Himself, and went out of the temple.'
- b. some Bible students and translators, try to complete that "I am" with the word "He", similarly to the way it is used earlier, as elsewhere when Jesus says, "I am the bread of life", "I am the light", and so on
 - (A) but here none of those make any sense in the context
 - (B) the contrast is between Abraham's entry into life (this statement by the way dispels the occult notion of the pre-existence of a person's spirit) and His personal existence as the Son of God
 - (C) His words are the same by which Yahweh identified Himself to Moses: 'And God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM"; and He said, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'"' (Exodus 3:14)
 - (D) "I can," says Jesus, "talk knowingly about Abraham, just as I can speak knowingly about God, for I AM eternal God myself."
- c. That this is what Jesus meant is shown by the aghast reaction of the Jews – they understood His claim and considered it blasphemous
 - (A) for which the punishment was stoning to death
 - (B) which they were willing to undertake, notwithstanding that they were subject to Roman law
 - (C) but Jesus' time was not yet come, and he passed out of their midst, unscathed

E. Conclusion

1. Come, See This Jesus

- a. we are invited in this gospel of John to meet Jesus, to see His works, to hear his words; all with the purpose stated by John
- b. that we 'may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ... may have life in His name' (John 20:31)

2. The Incarnation

- a. that is what the incarnation means: God in the Person of the Son, came into this world as a man – Immanuel; God with us – so that we might have life by believing in His name.
- b. what a cause for rejoicing – along with Abraham!
- c. for loving to tell the story of Jesus
- d. as in that carol that Ron & Barbara have sung & played for us

Mary, did you know

That your baby boy is Lord of all creation?

Mary, did you know

That your baby boy will one day rule the nations?

Did you know

That your baby boy is heaven's perfect Lamb?

This sleeping child you're holding

Is the Great I Am ^{-{3}}.

e. let us rejoice & praise in our hymn in closing, "We Will Glorify"

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ASV	American Standard Version of 1901
AV	Authorized (King James) Version of 1769
NAS	New American Standard version © 1960, 1995 The Lockman Foundation (usually the 1995 edition)
NIV	New International Version © 1984 by the International Bible Society
NLT	New Living Translation © 1996 Tyndale Charitable Trust
NKJV	New King James Version © 1979 Thomas Nelson Inc., Publishers
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version © 1989 National Council of Churches of Christ
WEY	The New Testament in Modern Speech © 1902, 1912 R. F. Weymouth

Some of the commentaries and resources used in the preparation of this message are identified as follow:

BM	-	<i>Biblical Museum</i> , Editor James Comper Gray, ca 1870
Bruce	-	<i>The Gospel & Epistles of John</i> , by F. F. Bruce, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, MI; 1983
Kerux	-	The sermon & illustration data base compiled by Rev. David Holwick at the web-site, www.holwick.com .
NICNT	-	<i>The New International Commentary on the New Testament</i> <i>The Gospel according to John</i> , by Leon Morris
NTC	-	<i>New Testament Commentary</i> , by William Hendriksen; Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI; 1954
RWP	-	<i>Robertson's Word Pictures of the New Testament</i> , by Dr. A. T. Robertson

2. 'I Love to Tell the Story,' by Arabella Catherine Hankey (1834-1911)

3. Mark Lowry (lyrics) and Buddy Greene (melody) – used by permission CCLI 1565957