

## SCRIPTURE LESSON TEXT

**JOHN 8:48** Then answered the Jews, and said unto him, Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil?

**49** Jesus answered, I have not a devil; but I honour my Father, and ye do dishonour me.

50 And I seek not mine own glory: there is one that seeketh and judgeth.

**51** Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death.

52 Then said the Jews unto him, Now we know that thou hast a devil. Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and thou sayest, If a man keep my saying, he shall never taste of death.

**53** Art thou greater than our father Abraham, which is dead? and the prophets are dead: whom makest thou thyself?

54 Jesus answered, If I honour myself, my honour is nothing: it is my Father that honoureth me; of whom ye say, that he is your God:

**55** Yet ye have not known him; but I know him: and if I should say, I know him not, I shall be a liar like unto you: but I know him, and keep his saying.

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

**57** Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?

58 Jesus said unto them, Verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.

**59** Then took they up stones to cast at him: but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.

### NOTES

# Jesus' Claim to Deity

Lesson Text: John 8:48-59

Related Scriptures: Exodus 3:13-15; John 5:31-37;  
7:16-18, 28-29; Revelation 1:5-8

TIME: A.D. 29

PLACE: Jerusalem

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**GOLDEN TEXT**—"Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am" (John 8:58).

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## *Lesson Exposition*

### **ACCUSED OF DEMONIC INFLUENCE—John 8:48-53**

#### **Dishonoring Jesus (John 8:48-49).**

The conversation Jesus was having with the Jewish religious leaders became increasingly intense. The Jews resorted to name-calling. Instead of pursuing truth, they merely lashed out at Jesus.

They accused Him of being a Samaritan and being demon possessed. These were two of the most offensive accusations they could make. They accused Him of being a Samaritan because He had questioned their lineage from Abraham (vs. 39). The Samaritans were a mixed race and considered by Jews as apostate. Jesus did not bother to respond to this part of their allegation.

Jesus did respond to their charge of having a demon. He did everything in order to glorify His Father in heaven, and that would have been impossible under the power of a demon. Their attack on Him was dishonoring, which in turn was dishonoring to the Father.

**Honoring the Father (John 8:50-51).** Jesus had no need to justify Himself. He was not trying to gain fame and glory for Himself. But the Father

sought glory for the Son, and He would judge people according to their stance toward Him.

Then Jesus told them that anyone who receives His words in faith would never see death.

**Exalting Abraham (John 8:52-53).** At this point, the Jews were even more convinced that Jesus was demon-possessed. His claim that anyone who kept His word would not see death did not align with what they thought to be facts.

Not only Abraham, but all the other prophets of the Old Testament were dead as well. The Jewish leaders therefore interpreted Jesus' claim as saying that Abraham and all the prophets had failed to obey His word.

They regarded Jesus' claim that His message could prevent death as absurd and dangerous. To them, Jesus was under extreme delusion and self-exaltation. Although He was presenting nothing but God's truth, they remained completely unmoved, a common trait of fallen human nature.

## **ACCUSED OF LYING—John 8:54-59**

**Honored by the Father (John 8:54-55).** In Jesus' personal testimony, He never sought to honor Himself. His honor came from His Father alone. Because Jesus spoke only the truth from the Father, He was assigned the highest esteem by the Father.

The leaders claimed Jesus' Father was their God, but Jesus said they did not even know Him. Jesus knew Him well, however, and if He claimed not to know the Father, He would then be a liar like them!

The proof Jesus offered of His true knowledge of the Father was His obedience to Him (vs. 55). He was implying that the proof of their unbelief was their disobedience to the Father's word.

**Honored by Abraham (John 8:56-57).** The Jews had asked Jesus if He claimed to be greater than their father Abraham (vs. 53). Without giving a direct answer, He had spoken instead of being honored by His Father, whom they claimed as their God. Jesus now claimed, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad" (vs. 56). Genesis gives no record of this, but Hebrews 11:8-13 indicates Abraham had an understanding of God's promises about the distant future.

Whatever Jesus' meaning was, the Jews continued to think only in physical terms. Therefore they responded indignantly that He was not even fifty years old yet and He claimed to have seen Abraham!

**I AM! (John 8:58-59).** If it had been Jesus' intent to merely indicate that He had existed before Abraham's time, He could have simply said, "Before Abraham was, I was," But that is not what He said. He had a more profound reality in mind. So He said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am." This was a clear declaration of

His deity. Jesus was explicitly alluding to Yahweh's identification of Himself to Moses at the burning bush.

To the Jewish leaders facing Jesus, it was obvious that by choosing to use this particular phrase, He was actually claiming to be Yahweh Himself! For them, this was the last straw! They believed He was blaspheming, so they determined to kill Him.

Since it was not yet time for Jesus to die, He easily escaped His assailants, leaving the temple and walking away. As the divine Son of God, He simply left them behind to carry on His work.

—Keith E. Eggert.

## **QUESTIONS**

1. What tactic did the Jewish leaders resort to in John 8:48?
2. What were the two accusations they made against Jesus?
3. Which charge did Jesus respond to?
4. What did Jesus say about seeking glory (vs. 50)?
5. What surprising thing did Jesus say next (vs. 51)?
6. Why did the leaders think Jesus' claim was preposterous, even demonic?
7. What did Jesus say about the Jewish leaders' claim that God was their Father?
8. What did Jesus say about Abraham (vs. 56)? What does this mean?
9. Why did Jesus say "Before Abraham was, I am" rather than "I was" (vs. 58)?
10. How did the leaders react to that statement? Why?

—Keith E. Eggert.

## PRACTICAL POINTS

1. True believers will praise God for who Jesus is and what He has done in their lives (John 8:48-51).
2. People who hate Jesus will often justify their hatred by making Him into something evil (vss. 52-53).
3. A true knowledge of God will lead to a proper knowledge of who Jesus is (vs. 54).
4. If we know God, we will demonstrate it by obeying Him and rejoicing in His Son (vss. 55-56).
5. Jesus is the eternal God, the Second Person of the Trinity (vss. 57-58).
6. As God in the flesh, Jesus was in complete control of His earthly destiny (vs. 59). He is also in control of ours.

—Brandon Byler.

## RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION

1. Why did Jesus' Jewish opponents accuse Him of being demon possessed (John 8:48)?
2. What is the proper understanding of Jesus' words in verse 51 in light of the fact that godly people die, sometimes even at an early age?
3. What are some things we learn about the Jews from their question to Jesus in verse 53?
4. How did—and how does—God the Father honor His Son (vs. 54)? How do we honor both of them?
5. Would you ask the same question of Jesus in verse 57 if you heard Him say that Abraham saw Him? Why or why not?

—Brandon Byler.

## Golden Text Illuminated

**“Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am” (John 8:58).**

In response to the Jews' question about Abraham, Jesus makes a dramatic claim to deity (cf. John 8:57-58). With this “I am” statement, Jesus makes it emphatically clear that He is the Yahweh of the Old Testament (cf. Ex. 3:14). Jesus is concealed in the Old Testament, yet revealed in the New Testament.

Jesus' Jewish listeners perfectly understood that He was claiming to be God. Such a claim was viewed as blasphemy and worthy of death. Consequently, they were ready to kill him (cf. Lev. 24:16; John 8:59). However, Jesus' claim was in fulfillment of the law, not a violation of the law. But His listeners rejected His affirmation and were bitterly offended.

Are you offended because the Bible claims Jesus is God? A careful analysis of Jesus' statements reveals who He claims to be. First, Jesus says, “Before Abraham was.” You may ask the question, “Before Abraham was what?” The answer is, “Before Abraham was born,” before he came into existence. But Jesus is not saying He came into existence right before Abraham did. He means that He has always been and always will be.

Jesus is the Alpha and Omega, who made all things to come into being. He needs nothing and no one in order to be who He is.

Do you believe in Jesus? Do you believe He is God? If not, we humbly pray that you will today.

—Kenneth E. Ware.