

John 8:48–59

48 Then the Jews answered and said to Him, “Do we not say rightly 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 And I do not seek My own glory; there is One who seeks and judges.

51 Most assuredly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he shall never see death.”

52 Then the Jews said to Him, “Now we know that You have a demon! Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and You say, ‘If anyone keeps My word he shall never taste death.’

53 Are You greater than our father Abraham, who is dead? And the prophets are dead. Who do You make Yourself out to be?”

54 Jesus answered, “If I honor Myself, My honor is nothing. It is My Father who honors Me, of whom you say that He is your God.

55 Yet you have not known Him, but I know Him. And if I say, ‘I do not know Him,’ I shall be a liar like you; but I do know Him and keep His word.

56 Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad.”

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

58 Jesus said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM.”

59 Then they took up stones to throw at Him; but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.

### ***“Who Was that Baby Boy?” John 8:48-59***

INTRO:

If you have ever had to brave the internet to find technical support for some program or computer hardware you have inevitably found yourself on a web page titled FAQ. FAQ is an acronym for “frequently asked questions.” While we will not be delving into the mysteries of computer software and hardware, we will be exploring another mystery which is far more important and has generated its own list of FAQ. I thought it

appropriate to give our time together today to answering frequently asked questions about the Lord Jesus Christ.

The first and the most important of these questions is the question: who is this man called Jesus? In **John 8:58** we read, ***“Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.”*** As we explore this statement together we will find our study falling into two parts.

***I. Who Is Jesus?***

***II. Why Is This Important To Us?***

***I. Who Is Jesus?***

A. This context is instructive. The Jews accused Jesus of being a Samaritan and having a demon (v. 48). Jesus responded that His purpose was not to glorify Himself. His desire was simply to honor the Father Who sent Him.

1. In **verse 51**, Jesus said, ***“Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death.”*** Someone who believes in the Son of God and remains in His Word will never die spiritually.

2. This struck a nerve with the Jews.

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

The mention of Abraham and the prophets was designed to shame the Lord Jesus into retreating from the claim He had just made. There are two issues in this statement. **(1)** The anticipated answer to the first question is “no.” And **(2)** the implication in the last question is that Jesus is exalting Himself to a place that He had no business occupying.

3. Our Lord answered both sides of this issue. First, to the charge He was exalting Himself, Jesus replied,

***“If I glorify Myself, My glory is nothing. It is My Father who glorifies Me, of whom you say, ‘He is our God.’ 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.”*** (v. 54 NIV)

In short, the Lord said, if this were just Me glorifying myself, that would be nothing. However, God the Father, Whom you claim as your God and Father, He glorifies Me! You claim to know Him when you don’t. I say I know Him because to deny it would make me a liar. You cannot win because I am not interested in glorifying Myself. I am interested in the truth.

4. Second, as far as being greater than Abraham, ***“Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad”*** (v. 56). Some wonder when it was that Abraham saw the Lord’s Day and was extremely glad. Frankly,

we do not know. It may be this was a prophetic vision granted him in his human life or he saw it in heaven. Still, the fact is: Abraham was not in opposition to Jesus. He rejoiced in the work that the Son of God would do.

5. All of this sends the Jews into a tizzy. You can hear the sarcasm in their voices as they respond in **verse 57**,

***“Then the Jews said to Him, ‘You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?’”***

B. In response to their sarcasm, our Lord made this amazing reply.

***“Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.”***

Now what did the Lord Jesus actually say?

1. Some assert He claimed nothing more than that He preexisted Abraham. The so-called Jehovah’s Witnesses claim this. They do not want to find a claim to deity here. If this were the case, we would expect to read, before *“Abraham came to be, I came to be”*, or even *“I was.”* But this is not what Jesus said! In fact, if Jesus had said this, we would not read what we find in **verse 59**,

***“So they picked up stones to throw at Him, but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple.”***

2. The language is decidedly not a claim of simple preexistence. The sentence in the Greek literally says, ***“Before Abraham came to be, I AM.”*** What exactly did Jesus assert? Our minds immediately go back to a scene on the backside of the desert. Moses is standing in the presence of the LORD listening to his marching orders (**Exodus 3:1-17**).

3. Moses did not take these orders without problems. We read his second objection in **Exodus 3:13**.

***“Then Moses said to God, ‘If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is His name?’ what shall I say to them?’ 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.’”***

We need to look at God’s reply carefully. This statement is the root of the covenant name of God, Yahweh. The name speaks of God’s eternity, His self-existence, and His self-sufficiency. Our God is not the One Who was, but is the One Who always is! He is eternally present. Our God says to Moses, *“You go and tell them the One Who is eternally present has sent you to them!”*

4. When the Lord Jesus said to these Jewish leaders ***“Before Abraham came to be, I AM,”*** He claimed to be the same Yahweh Who spoke to Moses out of the burning bush. These words are a clear identification with Yahweh in the Old Testament. And they are an unequivocal statement of the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ.

C. John is not shy about making this connection later in his Gospel. We read in **John 12:37-41**,

***“Though He had done so many signs before them, they still did not believe in Him, so that the Word spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: ‘Lord, who has believed what he heard from us, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?’ Therefore they could not believe. For again Isaiah said, ‘He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, lest they see with their eyes, and understand with their heart, and turn, and I would heal them.’ Isaiah said these things because he saw [our Lord Jesus’] glory and spoke of Him.”***

This clearly refers back to **Isaiah 6** and identifies the Lord Jesus with Yahweh of the Old Testament.

D. The Jehovah Witness would deny this, yet the Jews of Jesus’ day certainly understood what He claimed. They responded with the penalty for Blasphemy (verse 59).

***“So they picked up stones to throw at Him, but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple.”***

Some say Jesus never claimed to be God. The Jews of Jesus’ day disagreed.

***“Therefore the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, because He not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God.”*** (John 5:18)

## ***II. Why is this Important to Us?***

A. Why did John put this here for us? First, he wrote this because it is crucial that we understand Who Jesus was and is. We must understand that the One who came and died for us is none other than the eternal God in human flesh. This underlines the impact of what Jesus did for us. **Philippians 2:5-8** tells us,

***“Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”***

He was willing to do all this for us? What are we willing to do for Him?

B. Second, remember Elijah’s challenge to the people of Israel on Mount Carmel.

***“And Elijah came near to all the people and said, ‘How long will you go limping between two different opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, then follow him.’”*** (1 Kings 18:21)

Our choice is between ourselves and Jesus. Since the Lord Jesus is God, we need to faithfully and whole heartedly follow Him!

**Hymn #175 Hallelujah, What a Savior**