

The Lord Clearly Claims that He Is Fully God

John 8:48-59

John 8:48-59 – *“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.”*

Background Notes

Throughout the Gospel of John, the term “the Jews” indicates the Jewish leaders who opposed Jesus. In this section of John’s Gospel, “the Jews” were the Jewish religious leaders of Jerusalem. They would not acknowledge that Jesus was the Messiah. Instead, they attacked Him personally, first in words and then physically. On this occasion they picked up stones to throw at Him. Finally, they crucified Him.

In verse 48 they accused the Lord of two things: First, they accused Him of being a Samaritan, and then they said that he had a demon! When the Jews called someone a “Samaritan,” they meant he was a heretic. The Jews looked on the Samaritans as heretics, involved in false worship. When the Jews of that day said someone “had a demon” (demon-possessed), they meant that the person was insane or crazy.

This was the second time in the Gospel of John that the Lord was accused of being demon-possessed, or insane. The first time was in John 7:20, when the people said, “*You have a demon. Who is seeking to kill You?*” And in John 10:20

the Lord was accused of being demon possessed a third time. John 10:20: *“And many of them said, “He has a demon and is mad. Why do you listen to Him?”*

Our Lord denied these slanderous charges, but He didn't spend a lot of time defending Himself. But He did deny the false charges, and He stated in no uncertain terms that the people were lying (v55). Then He moved on in His ministry. We should follow the same example. When people slander us, we should state the truth, but we shouldn't spend a lot of time and energy defending ourselves. We should simply deny the false charges, state the facts, and allow the Lord to take care of the situation. We should follow the pattern of our Lord Jesus here.

In verse 59, they picked up stones to throw at Him. This was a clear indication that the Lord Jesus had claimed to be God. The Jewish people didn't stone people for minor theological differences! He definitely claimed to be God.

Doctrinal / Teaching Points

1. The Lord Jesus is incredibly gracious.

“Most assuredly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he shall never see death” (v51). The phrase, “shall never see death” means that person would never experience **spiritual** death, but have eternal life.

Notice that this verse, which is really an invitation to salvation, followed immediately after the people had dishonored the Lord in such a terrible way. They had just accused the Lord of being a heretic and of having a demon (or being insane), but immediately after the Lord refuted those false charges He said, *“...if anyone keeps My word he shall never see death.”* He directed this wonderful invitation to the people who had just maligned Him! Incredible grace!

Think of the incredible grace that our Lord displayed here! Dishonor had just been heaped upon Him: “You're a heretic!” “You're insane!” But the Lord Jesus was incredibly gracious. And He's just the same today. The Lord Jesus is incredibly gracious. If you think that you've gone too far, or that you have sinned too much to be forgiven, remember this teaching: **the Lord Jesus is incredibly gracious.**

2. The Lord Jesus claimed full deity.

In verse 56 the Lord said, *“Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad.”* How did Abraham “see Jesus Christ's day”? Abraham certainly knew the Messianic promise that was given to Him in Genesis 12:3, in the Abraham Covenant, when God said to Abraham, *“I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”* All the earth would be blessed through the descendants of Abraham. The Messiah would be a descendant of Abraham, and through the Messiah all the earth would be blessed.

So certainly Abraham knew of that Messianic promise, and Abraham may have been given more insight than we realize. In fact, Hebrews 11 indicates that the Old Testament saints understood a lot more than we may give them credit for. Hebrews 11:13 *“These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.”* So Abraham, along with others in the Old Testament, may have understood and foreseen a lot more about God’s plan than we realize.

“Then the Jews said to Him, “You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?” (v57). The “fifty years” mentioned here has nothing to do with the Lord’s actual age, which was around thirty. It is just a rounded-off number that they used as a relatively small number compared to the years back to Abraham. Actually the Lord had not said that He had seen Abraham, but rather, *“Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad.”*

In any case, Jesus replied, *“Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM” (v58).* This was not a grammatical mistake. The Lord purposely **did not** say, “before Abraham was I was,” but rather, *“before Abraham was, I AM.”* Why? Because “I AM” was the **divine title** used **only for God** in the Old Testament.

“I AM” was the way God revealed Himself to Moses at the burning bush. Exodus 3:13-14: *“Then Moses said to God, ‘Indeed, when I come to the children of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they say to me, ‘What is His name?’ what shall I say to them?’” And God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” And He said, “Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’”*

“I AM” was the divine title, and here in John 8 **Jesus claimed the divine title for Himself!** The Lord Jesus claimed full deity. That is why the Jews picked up stones to stone Him. No one tried to stone Him when He taught, “Love your neighbor as yourself.” No. But their reaction was very different when they recognized that He was claiming to be God. The Lord Jesus claimed full deity.

Practical Applications

1. Getting glory for ourselves is not *our* responsibility.

“And I do not seek My own glory; there is One who seeks and judges.” Also, in verse 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.”*

Even our Lord Jesus didn’t seek His own glory. He left it in the hands of God the Father who judges righteously (v50). Glorifying ourselves is not our responsibility.

Now all of us would probably say that we're not out to glorify ourselves, right? But does it bother us just a little when a fellow-believer begins to get more of the limelight or more attention than we do? Why do we feel a little jealous? Is it possible that we hoped to get some glory for ourselves? Is it a telltale sign that we're looking for glory for ourselves?

Some of my students are fiercely competitive when it comes to grades. They're all wonderful Christian kids in just about every way, and wanting to get good grades is a good thing, too - but some of them just can't bear it when another student gets a slightly better grade! On one occasion a student turned a paper back to me, even though I had given him an "A," and it was a good paper. He brought it back in to me because it was graded 2 points lower than another student who got an "A+!" He wanted me to read it over again, hoping that somehow he could get a slightly better grade. None of us is immune to seeking glory for ourselves!

Not too long ago I was speaking at a summer conference. There was another speaker at the conference, and everything was going well until I realized that some people were enjoying the other brother's ministry more than mine! That bothered me! So I had to get before the Lord about this problem. I had to ask myself, am I speaking for the glory of the Lord, or am I seeking attention for myself?

"Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time...(1 Peter 5:6)."
And Proverbs 27:2 - *"Let another man praise you, and not your own mouth; a stranger, and not your own lips."*

Getting glory for ourselves is not our responsibility!

2. Getting to know Him is our responsibility.

Look at verses 54-55: *"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. 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.'"*

Two different words are used for the word "know" in verse 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."* He used the word *kinosco* which means to come to know by experience o