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Who Do You Claim To Be?

JOHN 8:46-59

Introduction

1. I imagine that all of us, at one time or another, have seen a movie or play about a person who came to into a town and made themselves out to be someone who was important, wealthy or famous.
2. Many in the town believed them and were taken in by their deception until something happened which revealed a flaw in their story.
3. Throughout the eighth chapter of John's gospel, we find Jesus making statements which become more and more difficult for His listeners to accept.
4. He has constantly spoken about His Father and their inability to hear and believe His Word.
5. Now Jesus tells the people that it is precisely because He speaks the truth that they do no believe Him.
6. He also informs them that they do not hear the words of God because they are not of God?
7. As we finish out our study of John 8, we will see just how angry they became at Jesus because of these charges.
8. There are two things which we should each ask ourselves as we continue through out study:
 - a. Do I listen to the truth, even when it hurts?
 - b. Do I hear the words which God speaks to me through His inspired Word?

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I. Sinful Man or Sinless Son of God?

A. "WHICH ONE OF YOU CONVICTS ME OF SIN?" (V. 46A)

1. Jesus was not asking if anyone thought Him guilty of sin.
2. He knew that many did (e.g., *John 5:18*, where some thought He was not only guilty of breaking the Sabbath, but also of blasphemy by making Himself equal with God).
3. The question here is whether anyone could prove Him guilty.
4. If these men who were knowledgeable in the Scriptures, try as they might to refute His teachings, found it impossible to bring convincing evidence to convict Him of sin in court, should they not begin to question themselves?
5. Could it be that He was telling the truth, and if so, should they not believe Him?
6. The reason they did not believe Him, as Jesus will bring out in *verse 47*, is that only the one who is “of God hears the words of God”.
7. For this reason the conclusion is inevitable: “for this reason you do not hear them, because you are not of God.”

2a**B. “IF I SPEAK THE TRUTH, WHY DO YOU NOT BELIEVE ME?” (V. 46B)**

1. Belief in who Jesus is and what He says has been a constant theme throughout John’s gospel.

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2. In *John 1:7* we find that John the Baptist “came as a witness, to testify about the Light, so that all might believe through him.”
3. Following the changing of water into wine in Cana of Galilee, John tells us that Jesus’ “disciples believed in Him” (*John 2:11*).
4. Jesus told Nicodemus that God’s love for the world was so great “that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life” (*John 3:16*).
5. Twice, in *John 4*, we are told that the Samaritans of Sychar believed in Jesus, first because of what the woman had told them (v. 39) and second, because of what Jesus Himself had said (v. 41).

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6. They finally said to her, “It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves and know that this One is indeed the Savior of the world” (John 4:42).
7. When many in Galilee left Jesus to follow Him no more, Peter spoke up for the twelve and said, “We have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God” (John 6:69).
8. Jesus now tells the Jews here in the temple, “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)
9. The Jews had become like their ancestors, stubborn and rebellious:
“But this people has a stubborn and rebellious heart; they have turned aside and departed” Jeremiah 5:23 (NASB95).

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II. A Samaritan With A Demon?

A. “DO WE NOT SAY RIGHTLY THAT YOU ARE A SAMARITAN?” (v. 48A).

1. What did they mean?
2. In calling Jesus a Samaritan, the Jews were declaring Him to be . . .
 - a. *A foe of Israel*
 - 1) For over 500 years there had been strong hatred between the Jews and the Samaritans.
 - 2) No longer were the Samaritans considered a part of Israel, but people of mixed race.
 - b. *A law breaker*
 - 1) In their minds by healing on the Sabbath, He broke the Sabbath law.
 - 2) He did not follow the ceremonial ritual of washing His hands before

eating.

c. *A heretic*

- 1) They considered Him “a gluttonous man and a drunkard” (Matthew 11:19; Luke 7:34).
- 2) He was “a friend of tax collectors and sinners” (Matthew 11:19; Luke 7:34).

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B. “DO WE NOT SAY RIGHTLY THAT YOU . . . HAVE A DEMON?” (v. 48B)

1. They also accused Jesus of being possessed by a demon, but His words were far from being the result of demon-possession.
2. As He had already said, He was speaking “the words of God” (v. 47), which were “truth” (v. 46).
3. These were words which His Father had given him to speak (cf. John 3:34; 17:8, 14).

“For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God . . .” (John 3:34)

“for the words which You gave Me I have given to them . . .” (John 17:8)

“I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.” (John 17:14)

4. In obediently delivering His Father’s message, Jesus was honoring His Father.

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III. The One Who Brings Glory To His Father

A. “I DO NOT SEEK MY GLORY” (v. 50)

1. Jesus wasn’t concerned about His own reputation, He knew that His Father would take care of that.
2. Jesus wanted the Jews to know that the One whose glory and honor they

should be concerned about is the “One who seeks and judges” (v. 50) — God.

3. As Solomon wrote in Proverbs 5:21, “For the ways of a man are before the eyes of the Lord, and He watches all his paths.”

4. He is seeking those . . .

a. “whose heart is completely His” (2 Chronicles 16:9a).

“For the eyes of the Lord move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His . . .” (**2 Chronicles 16:9a, NASB95**)

b. “who fear Him” and “who hope for His lovingkindness” (Psalm 33:18).

“Behold, the eye of the Lord is on those who fear Him, on those who hope for His lovingkindness,” (**Psalm 33:18, NASB95**)

c. who are “righteous” (Psalm 34:15).

“The eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous and His ears are open to their cry.” (**Psalm 34:15, NASB95**)

5. Long before Jesus came to this earth, Abraham asked the Lord, “Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly [do right]?” (Genesis 18:25).

6. Hannah, the mother of Samuel said, “The Lord will judge the ends of the earth” (1 Samuel 2:10).

7. In Psalm 96:13, we are reminded that “the Lord . . . is coming to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples in His faithfulness.”

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B. IT IS VITAL THAT WE KEEP HIS WORD

“Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he will never see death” (John 8:51).

1. To 'see' death like 'see[ing] the kingdom of God' (*John 3:3*), means to enter into it, to experience it.

“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God” (*John 3:3*).

2. Earlier, in Capernaum, Peter confessed that Jesus had 'words of eternal life' (*John 6:68*).
3. The message which He brought delivers those who hear it and keep it from eternal death.
4. Here, the Jews misunderstood Jesus.
5. They believed He was speaking about physical death, the death of the body.
6. They thus declared, “Now we know that You have a demon. Abraham died, and so did the prophets. You say, ‘if anyone keeps My word, he will never taste death’” (*John 8:52, HCSB*).
7. To 'taste death' (cf. *Mark 9:1; Hebrews 2:9*), like to 'see death' in verse 51, means to 'experience death'.
8. They argue . . .
 - a. Abraham heard the word of God and obeyed it, but he died.
 - b. The word of God came to the prophets of Israel, and they delivered it faithfully to their contemporaries, but they too died.
9. If the word of God did not keep those who heard it and kept it from dying, how can this man's word protect against death?
10. If He believes this He is either disillusioned or demon-possessed — “Now we know that You have a demon” (v. 52).

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C. THE FINAL STRAW

1. It is the last part of this exchange between Jesus and the Jews which is most interesting.

2. The Jews reiterated that both Abraham and the prophets died and then made a statement and asked a question:

- a. “Surely you are not greater than our father Abraham . . .” (v. 53a).
- b. “Whom do You make Yourself out to be?” (v. 53b).

3. Look at what Jesus said in response:

“If I glorify myself, my glory means nothing. My Father, whom you claim as your God, is the one who glorifies me. Though you do not know him, I know him. If I said I did not, I would be a liar like you, but I do know him and keep his word. Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad.” (John 8:54–56, NIV84)

- a. Scripture does not tell us just how much God revealed to Abraham of Jesus coming and His ministry.
 - b. What is clear is that Abraham knew of the coming salvation and he rejoiced in knowing about it and expecting it.
4. The Jews could not believe what they were hearing. Here was a man, not even 50 years old, how could He have seen Abraham who had been dead for centuries?
5. In reality, they twisted His words. Jesus did not say that He had seen Abraham, but that Abraham had seen “My day” (v. 56).
6. Jesus now answered the question which the Jews had asked in verse 53:
- a. If Jesus had only wanted to claim that He existed before Abraham, it would have been simpler to say, “Before Abraham was, I was.”

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- b. Instead He said, “before Abraham was, I am”.
7. The verbs in this statement are significant. Jesus was claiming to have always existed, before Abraham existed, even before creation (John 1:1).
8. There is a strong connection between what Jesus says here and what God said through His prophet Isaiah in chapters 40-55:

Isaiah 41:4 – “. . . I, the Lord, am the first, and with the last. I am He.”

Isaiah 43:10 – “. . . understand that I am He. Before Me there was no God formed, and there will be none after Me.”

Isaiah 43:13 – “I am God. Even from eternity (Heb. “from the day”) I am He ...”

Isaiah 44:6 – “Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts: ‘I am the first and I am the last, and there is no God besides Me.’”

Isaiah 48:12 – “Listen to Me, O Jacob, even Israel whom I called; I am He, I am the first, I am also the last.”

9. With these words, Jesus was saying that in Him God lives, acts and speaks.
10. Where He is, God is. To see and follow Him is to see and follow God.
11. To the Jews these words were blasphemy. For this reason, “they picked up stones to throw at Him, but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple” (v. 59).

Conclusion

1. We now know who Jesus claimed to be — the Son of God who came to this earth to glorify His Father.
2. He did this by proclaiming the words which His Father gave to Him.
3. Jesus now calls us to come to Him by repenting of our sin, confessing His name and being buried with Him in baptism for the forgiveness of our sins.
4. Do you know God? Have you been listening to His Word lately?
5. If your answer is no, why not change that tonight?