

John 8:48-59

This passage begins with Jesus already in a heated argument with the Jews over his Father, their ancestry, where Jesus is from and for whom he speaks. By the time we get to 8:48, the tension between Jesus and the Jews is at an all-time high for the gospel, and (as we will see), it will only get higher!

8:48

St. Augustine writes: In this Samaritan the Lord Jesus Christ wanted us to understand himself. 'Samaritan', you see, means 'guardian.' ...He could have answered, 'I am not a Samaritan, and I do not have a devil.' What he did answer was, 'It is not I who have a devil.' What he answered, he refuted; what he kept quiet about, he confirmed. He denied he had a devil, knowing himself to be the expeller of devils; he did not deny that he was the guardian of the weak."

The answer to the Jews' questions are both "no." Since they do not know where Jesus is from physically, how can they know where he is from according to his divine nature?

8:49

What appeared to be the work of a demon was actually the glorification of God. To them, good appeared evil. This verse continues to show us the blindness of the Jews! What are some things in our lives that look bad on the surface, but are really good? (Or the other way around: things that look good but are really bad?)

8:50

From the NICNT: "There is possibly some of John's irony here. The Jews were continually 'seeking' Jesus in their mistaken zeal for God's glory, and their seeking was aimed at and would ultimately issue in Jesus' death.... There is a further ironical touch in that, while the Jews sought the death of Jesus, when it was brought about this would turn out to be his real glory." The irony in John's gospel is primarily seen through the glorification of Jesus as he is crucified (8:28).

8:51

Imagine you were in the crowd, listening to the argument between Jesus and the Jews. On one side, the Jews are claiming this young man is demon-possessed. These men are ones you know. They are respected and you have attempted to

live a life as good as theirs. Then there are the claims of Jesus; radical, unheard of, otherworldly. The Jews have claimed that Jesus is demon-possessed. Jesus is claiming that he can make you live forever. Who would you have trusted if you were living back then?

In our lives, we are constantly bombarded by messages that make Jesus out to be an irrelevant relic. And while they do not come out and say it directly, many of these messages are telling us: "Don't listen to Jesus, he's crazy!" Who can you identify as someone (or group) who says this kind of thing about Jesus?

How do you react to them?

8:53

The ironic answer to the question the Jews ask ("are you greater than our father Abraham?"), is (of course): YES!!! How would you answer their second question: who do you make Jesus out to be?

8:54

How does Jesus refer to the deity?

How does Jesus say the Jews refer to the deity?

What do you make of the difference? (Hint: remember whom the Jews claimed as their father in 8:53.)

8:55

Jesus draws a line in the sand. Things are black and white. He knows the Father and cannot deny that he does because then he would be like the Jews, who claim to know the Father but do not. There is no middle ground here.

8:56

What is the “my day” that Jesus refers to?

It is hard to pin-down what Jesus meant by Abraham’s rejoicing. It could be a present rejoicing of Abraham in heaven. The Rabbis of Jesus’ day thought that it was his rejoicing over being a blessing to all nations (Genesis 12:3). Some thought it was a rejoicing of being the father of many peoples (Genesis 15), and that the Messiah would come from his lineage. Some Rabbis of Jesus’ day interpreted Genesis 24:1 (“Abraham was... well advanced in years”) to mean that “Abraham entered into all the days of the future” (NICNT, 418).

8:57

Why do you think the Jews used the age of 50 as a reference point to “age” Jesus? (Who was in his young thirties during the time of his ministry.)

8:58

The claim to his divinity is unmistakable (Exodus 3:14). “John began his Gospel by speaking of the preexistence of the Word. This statement does not go further than that. It could not” (NICNT, 419). Even more so given that they are still in the temple complex. The glory of the Lord has filled the temple, and it is called a demon-possessed Samaritan. No wonder, then, that he leaves the Temple. What is the symbolism of Jesus leaving the temple at the end of this passage? (Hint: go back to John 1:11.)

8:59

Why do you think the Jews were unable to stone Jesus at the end of this passage?