

“A JOURNEY THROUGH THE GOSPEL OF JOHN” SERIES

#15: “You Are of Your Father the Devil!”

SCRIPTURE: 8:39-59

INTRO:

Jesus is still teaching in the temple area. He has made reference to Abraham, who the Jews correctly considered their forefather. In verses 37 and 38 He says, *“I know that you are offspring of Abraham; yet you seek to kill me because my word finds no place in you. I speak of what I have seen with my Father, and you do what you have heard from your father.”* So here in verse 39 they respond with: *“Abraham is our father.”*

Beauford Bryant and Mark Krause offer this note in their commentary on the gospel of John (College Press):

“Several things are implied in this claim. First, there was the immense pride of the Jews in the antiquity of their known ancestry. They were able to trace their genealogy back 2,000 years to a man who had a unique relationship with God. Second, Jesus’ charge that they suffer enslavement is answered by this claim. Abraham is their true father, therefore they are his true sons. We are not illegitimate children, they say. We are from the legitimate line of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, not the bastard line of Ishmael. Third, there is a personal challenge to Jesus in the assertion that Abraham is our father, presumably, as a Jew, Abraham is the ‘father’ of Jesus. If Jesus is now talking about having a different father, his very Jewishness is being called into question” (p. 207).

The point Jesus makes here in verses 39 through 41 is:

IT’S NOT GOOD ENOUGH TO BE A PHYSICAL DESCENDANT OF ABRAHAM.

You see, the Jews thought that when the Messiah came, they were going to be a part of his kingdom by the mere fact of their kinship to Abraham. But they were thinking on an earthly level, and the Messiah’s kingdom was spiritual. This is what they didn’t get.

When Jesus told them that they were slaves, He meant spiritually slaves to sin. They thought only of the physical, so they said, *“We . . . have never been enslaved to anyone!”*

And when Jesus inferred that they were sinful, they thought of only keeping the Sabbath and other similar rules of the Law of Moses.

Don't we do about the same thing? Aren't there certain Christian standards or rules that we would never violate, but some that we violate without even thinking? In Matthew 23:23-28, Jesus scolds the scribes and Pharisees:

23 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others. 24 You blind guides, straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel!"

25 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. 26 You blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and the plate, that the outside also may be clean."

27 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people's bones and all uncleanness. 28 So you also outwardly appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness."

Of course, Jesus died on the cross because we could never be good enough to be rewarded with eternal life, but hypocrisy is something that God won't tolerate. And don't try to use the excuse that everybody has shortcomings; trying and failing is one thing; not trying and excusing our shortcomings is quite another.

Then in verses 40 through 42 Jesus points out:

IF GOD WERE YOUR FATHER, YOU WOULD LOVE ME, FOR I CAME FROM GOD...

He builds an argument in three steps:

1. ***"If you were Abraham's children, you would be doing the works Abraham did"*** (v. 39);
2. ***"...now you seek to kill me..."*** (v. 40);
3. ***"This is not what Abraham did."***

Therefore, ***"You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies"*** (v. 44).

In other words, since they contemplate murder and reject the truth He speaks, they are showing that their *spiritual* father is the devil, not God.

The Greek word for *devil* here is DIABOLOS. It's the word from which we get our English word *diabolic*. It means literally *slanderer* or "*one who tells lies about other people.*" In 6:70 and 13:2, John uses this same word to describe Judas.

Jesus also refers to the devil as "*...a murder from the beginning...*" He was probably referring to the garden of Eden experience where the devil murdered Adam and Eve by causing them to lose their immortality by losing their access to the tree of life.

The bottom line is that these Jews haven't accepted Jesus as the Messiah because they do not really belong to God; they were doing the devil's bidding.

Well, they take this as an insult and respond by calling Him a *Samaritan*, which was a racially based slur in those days. They also accuse Jesus of being *demon-possessed*. He immediately denies that charge and says, "*...I honor my Father and you dishonor me. . . Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death*" (vv. (vv. 9, 51).

The Jews then thought that they had him now. They said, "*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?*" (vv. 52-53).

Jesus answered them telling them, "You think you know God, but you don't. If you did, you would believe me. Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He knew I would come, and he was glad."

The Jews shot back at Him, "*You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?*"

Jesus' answer to this was, apparently, the straw that broke the camel's back, so to speak. He said, "*Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am*" and "*They picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple*" (vv. 58-59).

This reminds me of what God said to Moses when he asked what God's name was in Exodus 3. God told Moses, "*I am who I am.*" In Hebrew, this is written as YHWH (Yahweh), which transliterates to Jehovah and is based on the Hebrew verb for "being." So, God's name is just "I am."

So, in effect, He says, "I *am* there with Abraham, and even before." You see, time doesn't limit God, so it doesn't limit Jesus. As John wrote in the very beginning of his gospel, "*In the beginning was the word...*"

IN CLOSING...

In Jesus' day, the Jews had eyes, but they didn't see; they had ears, but they didn't hear. They interpreted Scripture and the words of Jesus in such a literal, physical sense that prevented them from believing.

Jews today continue in that same mode. Oh, there are a few Jews here and a few there who have accepted Jesus as the promised Messiah, but for the most part, they are still as spiritually blind and deaf as they have ever been.

This, of course, is tragic. They will "*die in their sin,*" as Jesus said. But it's just as tragic that there are so many of us Gentiles who contend that we believe in God, but we won't kneel at the cross; we won't surrender to the Lordship of Jesus.

Then there are those well-meaning Christian preachers and teachers who tell people that if they'll just repeat a simple prayer, saying, "God, I'm sorry; I accept Jesus as my Lord and Savior," they're saved. David Platt, president of the Southern Baptist Convention's Mission Board, has said, "Should it concern us that the Bible never calls us to ask Jesus into our hearts? Should it concern us that the Bible never mentions a superstitious sinner's prayer, and yet that is exactly what we have sold to so many as salvation."

I've come to the conclusion that there are many of us who do not really know God nor His Son Jesus.