



International Bible Study Commentary

Verse-by-Verse Bible Lessons Thru the Bible

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John 8:48-59 Commentary New International Version

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further follow the verse-by-verse [*International Bible Study Commentary*](#). **Study Hints for Discussion and Thinking Further** will help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion: these hints are available on the *International Bible Study Commentary* website along with the *International Bible Lesson* that you may want to read to your class as part of your Bible study. You can discuss each week's commentary and lesson at the [*International Bible Study Forum*](#).

(John 8:48) The Jews answered him, “Aren’t we right in saying that you are a Samaritan and demon-possessed?”

After Jesus told the religious leaders who wanted to kill Him that their spiritual father was not Abraham or God but the devil (because the devil is always a liar and a murderer and they acted as the devil), they attacked Jesus using a racial slur (in their minds) when they said He was a Samaritan, because they hated Samaritans too.

Amazingly, Jesus did not defend himself against the false claim that He was a Samaritan. Though the Bible does not

tell us directly why Jesus did not defend himself against a racist charge, the Bible tells us enough about Jesus and His character to believe Jesus did not defend himself because Jesus saw nothing wrong with being a Samaritan (or a member of any other race, for He created all races and loves all races); therefore, He ignored the charge. Jesus was not racially prejudiced against anyone. Jesus came to show the Father's love and save the world, people of all races. For examples, He visited with a Samaritan woman at a well and led her and a Samaritan town to believe in Him as the Savior of the world (see John 4). He also told a parable that involved a good Samaritan who loved his neighbor as the LORD commanded and helped a stranger who had been left for dead (see Luke 10:25-37). Because Jesus was not racially prejudiced against anyone, He did not take the charge that He was a Samaritan as an insult.

In the previous commentary on John 8, we discussed what Jesus meant when He said the father of the religious leaders was the devil. In reply, they said He was possessed by a demon. He did reply to the charge that He had a demon because He wanted people to know the truth that He was the Son of God and "I Am," who came to save people from their sins and give believers eternal life.

(John 8:49) "I am not possessed by a demon," said Jesus, "but I honor my Father and you dishonor me.

Jesus did not tell lies and He did not want to kill anyone; whereas, the father of the religious leaders, the devil, wanted to kill Jesus; furthermore, at the very least the devil always inspired them to tell lies about themselves as hypocrites. They certainly told lies about Jesus when they later put Him on trial. Jesus' signs revealed the depths of the Father's love for everyone—Jews, Samaritans, Romans, and all Gentiles everywhere. Jesus' signs of compassion showed that He honored His Father and wanted to do His Father's work in the world. Jesus always gave His Father the credit for all the good He did when helping and teaching others. Because Jesus always did what the Father told Him, He honored His Father. The religious leaders did not obey God, did not honor God, wanted to discredit Jesus before the believing crowd, and sought to kill Jesus, they did not honor God or Jesus.

(John 8:50) I am not seeking glory for myself; but there is one who seeks it, and he is the judge.

Unlike the religious leaders, who sought glory from others by the way they prayed and wore special clothing in public, Jesus did not seek His own glory. Jesus set the example for those who would follow Him: believers should seek to glorify God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, not the glory that belongs to God alone. The Jewish religious leaders used the things of God to glorify themselves, and Jesus taught His true followers not to do this. God was the Judge of Jesus, not the religious leaders, and God would judge the religious leaders for rejecting Jesus as the Savior

of the world and Messiah.

(John 8:51) Very truly I tell you, whoever obeys my word will never see death.”

As previously used by Jesus in the Gospel of John, “word” (in the singular) meant the entirety of Jesus’ message; including what the Father and He said about Him, what He came to do, and His commandments: “keep my commands” and “teach all I have commanded you” (see John 14:15 and Matthew 28:18-20). When we keep the word of Jesus, we repent and ask His forgiveness when we fail to do so. Because we love Jesus and want to learn His message, believe His message, and obey His message completely, we have assurance from Jesus that we will never see death. When we truly accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior, He makes us clean, but living in this world will necessitate His washing our feet after we sin (see John 13:1-17).

(John 8:52) At this they exclaimed, “Now we know that you are demon-possessed! Abraham died and so did the prophets, yet you say that whoever obeys your word will never taste death.

Jesus spoke of the gift of eternal life that His Father sent Him to give to all who would believe in Him (see John 3:16-18). When Jesus gives His followers the gift of eternal life, they will never see (experience) spiritual death. When their body dies, they will go to be with Jesus where He has gone to prepare a place for them (see John 14:1-3). The

religious leaders did not understand that Jesus was not speaking about physical death, but the spiritual life that believers will enjoy with Jesus before and after their bodies die. Physical death in this world will happen to everyone until Jesus returns as He promised. Because the religious leaders misunderstood Jesus' meaning, they concluded that they now had conclusive evidence Jesus had a demon. Because God was not their true Father, they could not understand Jesus.

(John 8:53) Are you greater than our father Abraham? He died, and so did the prophets. Who do you think you are?"

When the religious leaders asked Jesus if He were greater than Abraham, they expected Jesus to say "No," and explain himself, for they believed no one was greater than their father Abraham. When they mentioned the prophets, who had died after Abraham died and before Jesus was born, they wanted to know if Jesus thought He was greater than the prophets. The prophets would have included Moses and Elijah and the prophets their fathers had killed. In Matthew 17:1-8, on the Mount of Transfiguration, God the Father declared that His disciples should listen to Jesus, His beloved Son: "While Peter was still speaking, suddenly a bright cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud a voice said, 'This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!'" (Matthew 17:5). Since keeping believers in you from ever dying, and keeping yourself from ever dying, seemed impossible to them, they

asked Jesus who He claimed to be: Was He greater than all those who had died before Him?

(John 8:54) Jesus replied, “If I glorify myself, my glory means nothing. My Father, whom you claim as your God, is the one who glorifies me.

Jesus applied another universal truth to himself and His listeners: those who glorify themselves are nothing. Or to quote a friend of mine, “Happy are those who pat themselves on the back for fear no one else will.” Jesus knew that His Father would glorify Him, and by His words and actions Jesus always glorified His Father and expressed His love for His Father and others. The religious leaders claimed God as their father; yet, they refused to glorify God the Father, preferring to glorify themselves and seek honor from others through their knowledge and interpretations of the Scriptures, and through their applications of their traditions to the behavior of others.

(John 8:55) 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 obey his word.

Jesus always told the truth to the religious leaders and the crowds. He told the religious leaders they did not know God or keep the word of God. They did not know God even as they claimed the Father was their God. Jesus also told them the truth about himself. Unlike them, Jesus was not a liar; Jesus said He personally knew God the Father because He did. He said He knew the entire message and

mind of God, and He kept (obeyed) God's entire message; including the message God the Father gave Him to give to the world. In speaking to them, Jesus left no doubt about His relationship to God the Father. Jesus claimed to obey and please God perfectly all the time.

(John 8:56) Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad.”

Jesus said that in the past, Abraham rejoiced when God the Father told him that he would see the coming of one of his descendants as Messiah and Savior of the world. The Bible does not tell us when God told Abraham about the coming of one of his descendants as the Messiah, but Jesus knew when this occurred because He was there. Abraham learned that though he would die physically, he would continue to live spiritually because of his faith (see Genesis 15:6 and Romans 4:3). Because Abraham did not see death spiritually, he saw Jesus, the Son of God, the Messiah, come into the world and he rejoiced when he saw Jesus, the Word of God, come into the world in human flesh. On the mountaintop (and even before then), Moses and Elijah certainly rejoiced together to see Jesus' day! Quoting Exodus 3:6, Jesus told the Sadducees in Matthew 22:32, “I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob”? He is God not of the dead, but of the living.”

(John 8:57) “You are not yet fifty years old,” they said to him, “and you have seen Abraham!”

According to tradition, a priest would “retire” at the age of 50. These religious leaders mocked Jesus because of His age, saying He was too young to know Abraham personally. They could not believe that Jesus could have ever seen Abraham alive. They wanted Jesus to tell them how He could have seen Abraham so they could have a further excuse to say Jesus had a demon. If Jesus had come into the world to glorify himself, He could have puffed himself up and elaborated to the religious leaders that He had seen Moses and Elijah and a long list of faithful believers in the Old Testament who rejoiced when they saw Him born in Bethlehem and saw His signs.

(John 8:58) “Very truly I tell you,” Jesus answered, “before Abraham was born, I am!”

Now, Jesus tells them even more directly what He has told them before. He left no doubt about who He was and is. Jesus said He lived before Abraham was born. In John 1, we learned that all created existence was created through Jesus, the Word of God. Notice: Jesus said to them, “I am,” rather than “I was.” “I am” relates to eternity: past, present, and future (not just the past). Jesus claimed to be eternal: One who was divine, uncreated, has always existed, and will never cease to exist; that is, God. “I am” is always present from beginning to end. “I am” is the Alpha and the Omega. In Revelation 1:8, Jesus told John, “I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.” “I am” is the Septuagint (the Greek Old Testament) translation of the

original Hebrew language in Exodus 3:14—“God said to Moses, ‘I AM WHO I AM.’ He said further, Thus you shall say to the Israelites, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’” The New Testament was written in Greek for the largest number of readers around the world and also uses “I am” as in the Septuagint.

(John 8:59) At this, they picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus hid himself, slipping away from the temple grounds.

The religious leaders understood that Jesus applied the divine name to himself and that was why He said that before Abraham came into existence He existed. Therefore, they took up stones to kill Jesus for blasphemy. They would have succeeded if His Father had not protected Him and helped Him leave the temple safely. The Father did this in fulfillment of the Scripture that the devil misapplied to Jesus when the devil tempted Jesus in the wilderness. In Matthew 4:5-7, we read, “Then the devil took him to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, ‘If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written, “He will command his angels concerning you,” and “On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.”’” Jesus said to him, “Again it is written, ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’” Jesus would not die physically until He had fulfilled all His Father’s purposes for Him, had given the word the Father sent Him to teach, had worked signs of God’s compassion, gave words of

warning, and died a sacrificial death on the cross for the forgiveness of sins—so He could cleanse His followers from sin and give them eternal life.

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. Why do you think Jesus did not deny that He was a Samaritan?
2. When accused of having a demon, what are some things Jesus said in John 8:49? What lesson might His followers learn from Jesus' reply?
3. What must someone do to never see death? What did Jesus mean?
4. What did Jesus say about seeking glory?
5. Why did the religious leaders pick up stones to throw at Jesus?

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