

Abraham and Jesus

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Date: 06 November 2022

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[0 : 00] Who do you think you are? That's what the Jewish people say to Jesus in verse 53. Who do you think you are?

Who do you think you are? Where people go on there, celebrities go on there and they discover things about their family history.

They discover more about who they're descended from. And it's fascinating to watch. I haven't watched loads of episodes over the years, but I have watched some.

And it is fascinating to see people understanding more about their family, more about where they're coming from, make connections with things, help them to make sense of who they are.

A few years ago, someone did some family research for me. I didn't know an awful lot about who I was descended from. And one fascinating fact that we discovered was my granddad apparently went to Algeria as a missionary for a few years.

[1 : 07] It's something we didn't really know much about. So it's great to find out a bit more. Well, those asking Jesus this question in verse 53, who do you think you are?

They have a lot of confidence about who they're descended from. We've seen that in chapter 8. If you have a look at verse 33, they say to Jesus, we are Abraham's descendants.

And in verse 39, Abraham is our father. They have lots of confidence about the fact that they're descendants of Abraham.

Abraham who received all those promises of God. And yet, just because they're descendants from Abraham, it doesn't mean that they're okay with God.

Abraham was a man of faith. He was looking forward to the arrival of Jesus. Jesus tells us that in verse 56. Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day.

[2 : 16] He saw it and was glad. He was looking forward to the day when the promised one, the promised seed of Abraham would come. The Messiah, the Lord Jesus.

And this question, who do you think you are? It's not kind of an innocent question that they're asking of Jesus. It's an angry, who do you think you are to say these things?

Jesus has told them in this chapter that their father is the devil. He's told them that they're slaves to sin.

He's told them that he's the light of the world. That he belongs to God. In fact, God is his father. And he's told them that you do not belong to God.

And they hate Jesus. They hate Jesus because of the things that he said. And our passage begins by them saying to Jesus, aren't we right in saying that you're a Samaritan?

[3 : 27] And that you're demon possessed? He calls them a Samaritan, which wasn't a nice thing for Jewish people to call someone. It was a racial slur.

They viewed Samaritans as half-breeds who intermarried with Gentiles. That's their view of Samaritans. They didn't follow the Jewish religion as it should have been followed.

And on top of that, they call him demon possessed. They're calling him evil. They hate Jesus.

And in our context today, I don't think many people would particularly be saying they hate Jesus.

They might think of Jesus as potentially a good person. A good teacher. He did something good.

Maybe a guru to follow. People maybe kind of like the idea that Jesus was born in Bethlehem as a baby.

[4 : 33] That's quite a nice story. But if you get into subjects like hell and death, if you were going through chapter 8 with them and showing that Jesus says you're a slave to sin, that's when people may have problems.

That's when he'll divide people. That's when people might begin to say, yeah, no, we hate this. We can't stand this.

You see, you have to make your mind up about who Jesus is. Not just think he's some good man. Some innocent baby who was once born.

You have to make your mind up about who Jesus is. You love him or hate him. And these Jewish people, they have made up their mind in this chapter about Jesus.

You're demon possessed. You're evil. We hate you. And by the end of this chapter, they want to stone him to death. So who do you say Jesus is this morning?

[5 : 45] Well, to help us to think about that, we're going to see who Jesus says he is. And we see three things. We firstly see that Jesus is the glorious God.

Jesus is the glorious God. God. They call him demon possessed. And demons, they don't give life. They bring death and darkness. And we saw earlier in chapter 8, in chapter 8 verse 12, that Jesus is the light of the world.

Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life. Jesus is the glorious light of the world. These Jewish people, they don't honor Jesus.

They don't see him as the light of the world. But Jesus says this to them, in verse 49, I am not possessed by a demon, said Jesus, but I honor my father, and you dishonor me.

[6 : 56] They do not honor him. We've seen that in the words that they call him in verse 48. They wouldn't be standing and singing with us, Jesus is the name we honor.

They wouldn't be singing, Lord, I lift your name on high. But Jesus here tells us that he honors his father.

If you weren't here listening to Phil's sermon last week on the father and son relationship, highly recommend listening to it. And Phil was saying of verse 50, the next verse, I am not seeking glory for myself, but there is one who seeks it, and he is the judge.

Phil was showing us that the father's motivation is to glorify the son, to glorify the Lord Jesus. And we get that again in verse 54.

If I glorify myself, my glory means nothing. My father, whom you claim as your God, is the one who glorifies me. Jesus is the glorious one.

[8 : 07] The father glorifies him. Thought last week about parents taking great delight in their children's achievements.

One example was given of coming fifth in the egg and spoon race. Yes, come on, my son. That's great. They glorify, parents glorify in their achievements.

Last year, I graduated from doing a degree, and I didn't do particularly well. I didn't get a first in the degree, and yet my parents seemed proud.

They joined and watched the ceremony. They were proud of my achievements, even though I hadn't done anything particularly wonderful in getting a first.

They were thrilled. Jesus is the glorious one, and the father makes sure he is glorifying his son because Jesus has come to do the work of salvation for us.

[9 : 14] The great work to come to live for us, to die for us, to bring us back to God. The father was going to glorify the son.

And the glory that he is seeking in his son will one day be expressed, as it says in Philippians chapter 2, that one day at the name of Jesus, every knee will bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge to the glory of God the father, that Christ is Lord. God the father, he's the champion of his son. He said at his baptism and in the transfiguration, this is my beloved son.

If someone was to turn around to you, though, and say, you're demon-possessed, I can't imagine you'd take too kindly to it, would you?

You'd probably think, what can I call them back that's worse? But listen to again, to how Jesus responds, verse 49, I'm not possessed by a demon, said Jesus, but I honor my father, and you dishonor me.

[10 : 40] I am not seeking glory for myself, but there is one who seeks it, and he is the judge. Jesus says, I'm not seeking glory for myself.

My father is. If he was seeking glory for himself, he probably wouldn't be responding to them quite as graciously as he does. But he does tell them that God is the judge.

And that if you reject me, if you dishonor me, he'll reject you. But he's warning them, very graciously, that God is the judge.

Now's not the time for judgment. Jesus has come not to condemn the world, but to save the world. But one day there will be a judgment. And Jesus comes, and he's making his father known to them, even though they've called him a Samaritan and demon-possessed.

He's making known to them that his father is seeking the glory of the son. For the son has come to do a great work of salvation.

[12:05] The son is the glorious one. And so I think it's good for us to think this morning, do we honor God? Do we give honor to Jesus?

Do we want his glory to be known? Or do you want your own glory to be known? We prayed earlier the words of the Lord's Prayer, which says, hallowed be your name, which means to glory, your name be glorified, God.

Your name be honored. Is that a prayer you want to pray? Is that a prayer you want to pray day by day, that God's name might be honored, that you might honor his name?

Does it bother you when people use Jesus' name as a swear word? Hey, that's my Savior you're talking about. He's the glorious one, the glorious Savior.

And God the Father, He is glorifying His Son. He is the champion of His Son. He is seeking His glory.

[13:22] And this glorious Savior, He's also the giver of life. The giver of life. Have a look at verse 51. It says, Very truly, I tell you, whoever obeys my word will never see death.

This is a marvelous statement. Whoever obeys my word will never see death. This is the free offer of the gospel.

Whoever, anyone, even the people calling him a Samaritan and demon-possessed, whoever. And it's for those, Jesus says, who obey or keeps my words.

Those who keep hold of the word of Jesus. It means to remain, to live by, to hold on to, to treasure the words of Jesus.

The word of the gospel, trusting not yourself to save, but Jesus. Glorifying not yourself, but Jesus, whom the Son, whom the Father glorifies.

[14:40] Keeping on, keeping on, walking with the Lord Jesus. Not just hearing a nice thing that He said once and thinking, yeah, I'll follow that for a bit.

But there's many other voices I can listen to. No, following Jesus wholeheartedly. Keeping on, treasuring Him and His words. I was thinking, as I was thinking about these things, I was thinking of adverts which used to come on at Christmas time.

A dog is for life, not just for Christmas. Some people think the thought of having a nice, fluffy dog is a great thing. And so, I think the advert is saying, if you're going to buy a dog for Christmas, maybe for a child who's desperate that mommy and daddy get them an animal, a pet for Christmas.

Don't forget that it involves work too. Yeah, they might be a great thing. They are fluffy and cute and bring joy, but you also have to pick up its toilet business when you take it for a walk.

You have to take it for walks. You have to pay vet's bills. It may not be as straightforward and wonderful as you think, but they are great.

[15:59] Dogs are great. And the Christian life is great. We get to know God for ourselves. We get to know Jesus, the glorious one, the one who comes to give us his life.

But Jesus says we've got to keep on following him. And there are times in the Christian life when it's really hard. We live in a world that put Jesus to death, a world that hates him, a world that hates those who follow him.

We ourselves will be tempted with sin, we'll fall into sin, we'll have doubts. Being a Christian is great, it's the best life, but remember it can be hard. And so Jesus says whoever keeps my words, keep on keeping on walking with Jesus, they will never see death.

And we can be confident of his keeping because Jesus by his spirit works in us to keep us. He does hold on to us, he promises that.

In chapter 10 he says these words, I give them eternal life and they shall never perish, no one will snatch them out of my hands.

[17:15] And Jesus says here, they will never see death. He's the giver of life.

For God so loved the world that whoever would believe in him should not perish but have eternal life. He is the giver of life.

But you might think, well that's funny. Christians still die, don't they? Just a month or so ago we heard of the death of a Christian guy called Brother Andrew who founded Open Doors, a great work

amongst persecuted Christians.

But he died. He was a faithful Christian. But he died. A few years ago the great evangelist known across the world, Billy Graham, he died.

Just over a decade now. A great Christian preacher in this country, John Stott, he died. Christians die and we will know of people personally to us who have died.

[18 : 30] But Jesus says here, they will never see death. death. And yet in John chapter 11 we read of the death of Lazarus, one of Jesus' closest friends.

Jesus, he wept when he heard of his death. Does this mean Jesus' words here, we will never see death, aren't true? He says them in chapter 8 but then in chapter 11 does he realize, oh no, sorry, I was wrong.

We'll have a look with me in chapter 11 and verse 25.

Jesus said to her, Lazarus' sister, Martha, Jesus said to her, I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live even though they die.

And whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this? Jesus says, though we may die physically, death for the Christian, death for the person who trusts in him, it's like we will never die.

[19 : 54] It's like we take a quick nap. Take a quick nap and you wake up again and you feel refreshed. But Jesus is saying, this is even better.

Death is just like going to sleep and then waking up again to being more alive than we could ever have been alive here. No more pain. No more suffering.

No more illness. No more tears. No more death. Death. Alive forever. More alive than we've ever been here with our God and his people.

And that's what awaits those who obey Jesus' words, who keep on believing in him. They will never, never see death. Because Jesus is the giver of life.

As we read through the rest of John, we get to John chapter 19 and we read in that chapter of Jesus breathing his last.

[20 : 59] But you then get to chapter 20 and you see that the grave where Jesus' body laid could not contain him. It was empty. Jesus rose and in him we're alive too.

Jesus is the glorious God. He is the giver of life. And so Christian brothers and sisters, we may face death in this world.

Some of us have many years left. Some of us may not. Some of us may really fear death. Maybe we fear getting ill because we don't know what that may do to us.

It may mean we're closer to death. If we get ill. But in him we have life. And it is certain and assured. We will never taste death.

We'll be more alive than we've ever been before. Over the last year or so, I knew a guy who was a retired vicar.

[22 : 07] This is when I was at Bishop Hannington Church in Hove. And he was dying over the last year or so. And he described death in a way I've never heard it described before.

Like waking up on Christmas morning. You know, that joy and excitement you have on Christmas morning. But not just like that. He described it as like waking up and having a thousand Christmas mornings rolled into one.

A wonderful way to describe death. And on Easter Sunday he was taken from this world and he got to experience that.

On Easter Sunday of all days, Resurrection Day. What a wonderful hope we have. If we believe in the Lord Jesus, if we obey his word, we will never see death.

Jesus is glorious. Jesus is the giver of life. And finally, we see in these verses that Jesus is greater than Abraham.

[23 : 15] greater than Abraham. Jesus has given a gracious invitation to be free from death even to these Jews who call him a Samaritan and demon-possessed.

And so how do they respond? Verse 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. Are you greater than our father Abraham? He died and so did the prophets.

Who do you think you are? They stay in the hardness of their hearts. They hate Jesus even more, even after this wonderful invitation salvation of Jesus to be, to be, to be, to not see death.

They say to him, but Abraham died and Abraham is our father. We descended from him. He's a spiritual giant. He's the one who received those great promises of God's.

[24 : 34] You're saying you're greater than him because he died. Are you saying that you're not going to die and you're greater somehow? It's completely outrageous to them.

But there we get this question, who do you think you are? We've seen already they trace their ancestry back to Abraham. Who does Jesus think he is?

Well, Jesus, he doesn't need to go on a BBC show to find out. He tells them in verse 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. 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 I obey his words.

Jesus talks about his father again. His father is God. He traces his family back to God. John starts his gospel by telling us that the word was with God in the beginning.

[25 : 52] The word was God. Jesus is God. Father, Son and Spirit. He is the Son of God. They claim they know God, but they don't.

What Jesus says, it's an extraordinary thing. And if it wasn't true, then they would be right. Jesus is a liar. God is a But if it's true, then it's absolutely incredible.

Abraham, who they mentioned, he was a man, an ordinary man living in a city full of idol worshippers, but God chose him out of that, took him out of that to make these extraordinary promises, promises which he believed in by faith.

And because of that, the Bible tells us it was credited to him as righteousness. He could look forward to the day when his Savior would come and make him righteous. Abraham looked forward to that day and Jesus tells him that here in verse 56.

Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day. He saw it and was glad. a day, a great day when all peoples of the earth would be blessed, a day when the future offspring of Abraham would be born, who comes to deal once and for all with our sin.

[27 : 29] And that is Jesus, the glorious God, the glorious giver of life. Jesus is greater than Abraham. And if these Jewish people that Jesus is interacting here, if they were to take after their father Abraham, they would be thrilled that Jesus was there standing in front of them talking.

Jesus had come, the one Abraham looked forward to. But the people respond in verse 57 and they say this, you are not yet 50 years old, they said to him, and you have seen Abraham.

They're even more angry, how dare you say this, you're not even 50 years old, you haven't seen Abraham. What are the rubbish, you're lying, they say. C.S.

Lewis was a great writer and theologian, he is best known for writing those chronicles of Narnia books, and he said of Jesus, that you have to make your mind up about him.

You either call him a liar, a lunatic, or a lord. A liar saying he's God, but he's actually lying.

[28 : 57] He's convincing millions of people that he's God. And that's what these Jewish people say here to him. You're a liar. Yeah. Lewis also said you could call him a lunatic.

He's just some mad man. Like if I was to stand here this morning and tell you that I am, I am a poached egg, you'd think I'm mad.

Jesus is saying I am God. And you could dismiss him as saying he's a lunatic, he is mad. mad. Or he is Lord.

He is God. And you must do something about that. He said this, you must make your choice. Either this man was and is the son of God or else a mad man or something worse.

You can shut him up for a fool. You can spit at him and kill him as a demon. Or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God.

[30 : 10] But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about him being a great teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.

These Jewish people did just that. They shut him up for a fool. They called him hateful things. They tried to stone him to death. It wasn't time for Jesus to die yet.

But before Jesus slips away at the end of the chapter, Jesus says this. Verse 58. Very truly I tell you, Jesus answered, before Abraham was, I am.

before Abraham was, I am. Those two little words that maybe we could just skip over, they're so crucial and important.

I am. Think of the book of Exodus, Moses in the desert, wandering around and sees this bush burning away and yet not burning up.

[31 : 24] and he goes over to it to look at this strange sight and he hears the voice of God calling out to him, I am who I am.

I am God. I am unlike any other. I'm not defined by human standards. I am the self sufficient, the great Lord God almighty.

Almighty. these Jewish people, they call him demon possessed and a Samaritan. They accuse him of lying, but Jesus stands before them and says, I'm God.

I am. He is God. We've seen more of him today. We've seen him, the glorious one who honors his father and we should honor him too.

We've seen he is the giver of life. If we trust in him, we will never see death. And so we have a choice.

[32 : 34] Who do you think he is? Either he's lying, greatest liar in history, he's lunatic, he's demon possessed, or we bow down before him as the great I am.

This is God. One who never had a beginning, never had an end, never will have an end. The one we want to honor, the one we want to spend our life following, the glorious one.

Because of him we will never taste death. This is the great I am. Let's pray.