

John 8:12-59
Exodus 3
Psalm 47

“Who Is Your Father?”

June 21, 2020

(Read Exodus 2:23-3:22)

Why does God save Israel from Egypt?

The LORD says that he has *seen* their affliction –
and he has *heard* their cry.
He *knows* their sufferings.

But why does God save Israel from Egypt?

2:24 – God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob.

If we had to be “good enough” for God –
we would never make it!

But it’s not about being good enough!

It’s about God showing mercy!

It’s about God remembering his promises!

It’s about God being a faithful father who cares for his helpless children!

What were the promises to Abraham?

The Land, and the Seed, and the Blessing to the Nations.

The Land – the Promised Land, which God had promised to Abraham.

The Seed – the offspring – children –

God had said that Abraham’s children would become like the sand on the seashore.

And the Blessing to the Nation –

that all nations would be blessed through Abraham – and through his seed –
through his offspring.

Exodus 3 focuses on the first two – the Land and the Seed.

And if you think about it, that makes sense.

Israel cannot become a blessing to the nations
so long as they are slaves in Egypt.

The Son of God must enter his inheritance

in order for the nations to participate in that inheritance.

But it’s worth noting that when Israel went up out of Egypt,
there went with them a “mixed multitude.”

There were many Gentiles – many from the “nations” –
who joined themselves to Israel –

and thus “all nations” began to share in the blessing of Abraham.

Psalm 47 recognizes this – and so calls *all peoples* to shout and give praise to God –
so that the princes of the peoples would gather as the people of the God of Abraham!

In other words – that *we Gentiles* might be included as “Abraham’s seed.”

Sing Psalm 47A

Read John 8:12-59

John 8 is a challenge for a preacher because the whole chapter has a single point.

The whole chapter comes back to one question: “who is your father?”

8:12-30 Who is Jesus’ father?

8:31-59 Who is the father of the Jews?

Abraham? (31-40)

God? (41-47)

Or the Devil? (48-59)

Your Bibles may have a section called John 7:53-8:11

I think it is likely that this episode actually happened,

(it is certainly consistent with all that we know of Jesus)

but it does not appear in the earliest manuscripts of John’s gospel.

There are some early manuscripts that put it at the end of Luke or elsewhere in John.

Most likely the early church was convinced that this story belonged in the gospels,
but couldn’t decide where.

But it doesn’t quite seem to fit the flow of what John is doing in this section of his gospel.

In John 8:12 Jesus is responding to the Pharisees’ question at the end of chapter 7
as to where he comes from.

They said that “no prophet arises from Galilee.”

Jesus doesn’t bother to correct them.

It would serve no practical purpose to tell them that he was from Bethlehem.

So instead Jesus says “I am the light of the world”

We are still on the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles.

Earlier Jesus has said that he was the fountain of living water –

he is the rock in the wilderness that provides rivers of living water for his people.

He did this on the same day that the priests in the temple

were preparing their annual water ceremony.

Another ceremony that the priests had developed was focused around

reminding the people of the pillar of fire.

And so, in our text today Jesus calls himself “the light of the world.”

Jesus claims to be the pillar of fire and cloud that Israel is to follow.

“Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

I am the pillar of fire.

Follow me!

This echoes John’s statement in 1:4-5

“In him was life, and the life was the light of men.

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.”

The light of the world has come.

The one who follows him will never walk in darkness,

because the light of life will shine before his path.

1. Who Is Jesus’ Father? (v12-30)

a. The Light of the World – the Witness of the Father and the Son (v12-20)

If you knew me you would know my Father

¹² Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” ¹³ So the Pharisees said to him, “You are bearing witness about yourself; your testimony is not true.” ¹⁴ Jesus answered, “Even if I do bear witness about myself, my testimony is true, for I know where I came from and where I am going, but you do not know where I come from or where I am going. ¹⁵ You judge according to the flesh; I judge no one. ¹⁶ Yet even if I do judge, my judgment is true, for it is not I alone who judge, but I and the Father^[a] who sent me. ¹⁷ In your Law it is written that the testimony of two people is true. ¹⁸ I am the one who bears witness about myself, and the Father who sent me bears witness about me.” ¹⁹ They said to him therefore, “Where is your Father?” Jesus answered, “You know neither me nor my Father. If you knew me, you would know my Father also.” ²⁰ These words he spoke in the treasury, as he taught in the temple; but no one arrested him, because his hour had not yet come.

The Pharisees have had enough.

They are tired of Jesus’ claims.

Jesus had said in chapter 5 that if he testified alone, then his testimony is not valid.

Now they complain that he is testifying alone.

No Jewish court would accept his claims!

There must be at least two witnesses to establish any claim.

In John 5 Jesus had pointed to John the Baptist, Moses, and the works that he did.

Now, however, Jesus is willing to go toe to toe with them.

“Even if I do bear witness about myself, my testimony is true, for I know where I came from and where I am going, but you do not know where I come from or where I am going.” ¹⁵ You

judge according to the flesh; I judge no one. ¹⁶ Yet even if I do judge, my judgment is true, for it is not I alone who judge, but I and the Father^[a] who sent me. ¹⁷ In your Law it is written that the testimony of two people is true. ¹⁸ I am the one who bears witness about myself, and the Father who sent me bears witness about me.”

The Father and the Son both testify.

But the Pharisees are not going to let him get away with this.

“Where is your father?”

You claim that he testifies of you,
but we haven’t heard him!

Oh!

This is exactly where Jesus wants them.
They set themselves up beautifully!

You say that you haven’t heard my Father?

I’m not surprised!

“If you knew me, you would know my Father also.”

(And John points out that Jesus said this in the temple,
still on the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles.

They want to arrest him, but no one does yet,
Because “his hour had not yet come.”)

So instead Jesus says (verse 21).

b. I Am Not of This World – I Speak Just as the Father Taught Me (v21-30)

When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he...

²¹ So he said to them again, “I am going away, and you will seek me, and you will die in your sin. Where I am going, you cannot come.” ²² So the Jews said, “Will he kill himself, since he says, ‘Where I am going, you cannot come?’” ²³ He said to them, “You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. ²⁴ I told you that you would die in your sins, for unless you believe that I am he you will die in your sins.”

Jesus is answering their question.

Where is his father?

He is going to his Father—and they cannot come.

Since they do not believe in him, they will die in their sins.

Jesus is the one who comes from above.

“You are from below; I am from above.

You are of this world; I am not of this world.

I told you that you would die in your sins, for unless you believe that I am he

you will die in your sins.” (23-24).

If you do not believe that Jesus is the one who came down from heaven for us and for our salvation, you will die in your sins.

²⁵ *So they said to him, “Who are you?”*

Who are you?

Jesus is unlike anyone they have ever met.

He knows the scriptures intimately, and he doesn't appear like a madman, but the things he says are loony!

He is claiming to be “from above”—that he, unlike everyone else, is “not of this world.”

Who are you, Jesus?

You can almost see Jesus' smile at this.

Jesus said to them, “Just what I have been telling you from the beginning.”²⁶ I have much to say about you and much to judge, but he who sent me is true, and I declare to the world what I have heard from him.”²⁷ They did not understand that he had been speaking to them about the Father.

“Just what I have been telling you from the beginning!”

Jesus speaks what he has heard from his Father.

As the Father speaks, so the Son speaks.

As the Father judges, so does he judge.

And then, pointing to the cross, he says (verse 28).

²⁸ *So Jesus said to them, “When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me.*

The cross—when he is lifted up—will demonstrate the truth of his claims.

At the cross, the Father will speak, vindicating the Son, because (verse 29).

²⁹ *And he who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to him.”*

John's gospel portrays the cross as the glorification of Jesus.

Yes, it is also his great humiliation, but at the cross, his glory is revealed.

On the cross, Jesus is revealed as the exalted Son of God.

And such was the power of Jesus' words that many believed in him (verse 30).

³⁰ *As he was saying these things, many believed in him.*

In John 6, at the Passover, he insisted that those who believe in him

must eat of his flesh and drink of his blood.
Here in John 8, at the Feast of Tabernacles,
the feast celebrating the provision of God for Israel,
Jesus insists that Israel is a bastard in bondage.

Because now that the Pharisees have questioned his parentage,
Jesus' turns the tables on them.
Who is *your* Father?

2. Who Is the Father of the Jews? (v31-59)

a. We Are Offspring of Abraham! (v31-41a)

If you were Abraham's children, you would be doing the works Abraham did

³¹ So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, ³² and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." ³³ They answered him, "We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say, 'You will become free'?"

³⁴ Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave^[b] to sin.

³⁵ The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever. ³⁶ So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. ³⁷ I know that you are offspring of Abraham; yet you seek to kill me because my word finds no place in you. ³⁸ I speak of what I have seen with my Father, and you do what you have heard from your father."

³⁹ They answered him, "Abraham is our father." Jesus said to them, "If you were Abraham's children, you would be doing the works Abraham did, ⁴⁰ but now you seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. This is not what Abraham did. ⁴¹ You are doing the works your father did."

He turns to those Jews *who had believed in him* and says, (31-32).

Every free Jew would have prayed to God, thanking him that he was not a slave.
But Jesus says that only his disciples are free.

What does it mean to "abide in my word"?

To abide in Jesus' word means to believe in Jesus.

But it adds a further nuance.

Because these Jews have "believed" in Jesus.

But they do not abide in his word.

"Abiding in my word" means to live – to dwell – to remain in the Word of Christ.

It means that you see your life in Jesus!

And yes, regular bible reading and study is indispensable for this,
but abiding in my word does not mean simply that you read your bibles.

Abiding in Christ's word means not only that we read and believe,
but also—and most importantly—that we do what we have heard from Jesus.
The Jews do not understand this.

They insist (verse 33)

*They answered him, "We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone.
How is it that you say, 'You will become free'?"*

But, Jesus says, "everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin."

Yes, the Jews are "offspring of Abraham,"

but they are no better than slaves. (Paul makes the same point in Galatians 3-4)

And if all of Israel is enslaved to sin,

then that means that there is no son to set them free.

That is why Jesus had to come down from heaven.

There had to be a holy son—a son who was not corrupted and enslaved to sin—
so that God could redeem his children.

And therefore "if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed."

Jesus is the Son who speaks of what he has seen with his Father.

...And so are the Jews.

"You do what you have heard from your father." (38)

Immediately the Jews reply with some heat,

"Abraham is our father!" (39)

No, Jesus says, "If you were Abraham's children, you would be doing what Abraham did,
but now you seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God.
This is not what Abraham did." (39-40)

Jesus is not interested in biology.

Sure, they were physically descended from Abraham,

but that does not mean anything where salvation is concerned.

They are doing what their father did.

Jesus has now called them both slaves and bastards.

In anger they cry out "We were not born of sexual immorality.

We have one Father—even God!"

So close... and yet... so far from the truth!

b. We Have One Father – even God! (v41b-43)

If God were your Father you would love me

They said to him, "We were not born of sexual immorality. We have one Father—even God."

⁴² Jesus said to them, “If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and I am here. I came not of my own accord, but he sent me. ⁴³ Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word.

Back in Exodus 4 God declared “Israel is my son, my firstborn.”

Ever since, the Jews had prided themselves on their privileged status.

But they misunderstood the nature of their sonship.

God had adopted Israel as his son – his firstborn.

But Israel’s sonship was not *the point* of his adoption.

It pointed beyond itself to the eschatological Son.

Israel was the son of God—the children of Abraham indeed partook of the covenant,
but only insofar as they looked to Christ.

The first son of God was Adam.

And Adam had failed to live like the son of God,
and so he exchanged the fatherhood of God
for the fatherhood of the Serpent.

And all those who do not believe in the Lord Jesus are but children of the devil.

The children of God will recognize their brother,

because see Jesus doing what their Father did.

Jesus declares that the Seed of Abraham are those who rejoice at his coming.

As John 1:11 puts it:

“He came to his own, and his own did not receive him.”

c. You Are of Your Father the Devil (v44-47)

Whoever is of God hears the words of God

⁴⁴ *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. ⁴⁵ But because I tell the truth, you do not believe me. ⁴⁶ Which one of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me? ⁴⁷ Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God.”*

Jesus said in verse 34 that “everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin.”

Now in verse 46 he asks, “which one of you convicts me of sin?”

God had called Israel, his son, to love and obey him.

But Israel is enslaved to sin.

Now the Last Adam has come – the eschatological Son,

the one who came down from heaven,

and he demonstrates by his life that he is the Son of the Father,

because he does not sin.

But if Jesus is the eschatological Son who speaks the truth
that he has heard from his father,
then there can be only one reason why they do not hear him:
“You are not of God.” (47)

You are of your father, the devil – and your will is to do your father’s desires.

There is a warning here for us.

Do not think for a minute that your profession of faith exempts you from this warning.
Because Jesus speaks it to those “who had believed in him.” (Verse 31)
And so I ask *you* who have believed in Jesus,
do you hear him?
You were once children of the devil.
Is it still your will to do your old father’s desires?

“Whoever is of God hears the words of God.
The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God.” (47)
If you hear Jesus,
then repent and believe,
and abide in his word.

The Jews do not hear Jesus.
They reply (48)

d. Are You Greater Than Our Father Abraham? (v48-59)
Before Abraham was, I am

⁴⁸ *The Jews answered him, “Are we not right in saying that you are a Samaritan and have a demon?”*

I mean, Wow!
A few minutes ago they were saying that he was from Galilee.
Now they accuse him of being a Samaritan!
(And for a Jew, this was about as bad an insult as you can get!
Well, except maybe “having a demon!”)

But Jesus is not concerned for his own glory (49-51)

⁴⁹ *Jesus answered, “I do not have a demon, but I honor my Father, and you dishonor me. ⁵⁰ Yet I do not seek my own glory; there is One who seeks it, and he is the judge. ⁵¹ Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death.”*

But for the Jews, this merely confirms their suspicion.

(52-53)

⁵² The Jews said to him, “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.’ ⁵³ Are you greater than our father Abraham, who died? And the prophets died! Who do you make yourself out to be?”

This Jesus belongs in the loony barn.

Not even the prophets dared to say that if anyone kept their word
they would never taste death!

Who do you make yourself out to be?

But Jesus insists that he is not trying to glorify himself (54).

You claim that he is your God, but you are unwilling to hear the one he has sent.

Therefore it is plain that (55)

⁵⁴ Jesus answered, “If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing. It is my Father who glorifies me, of whom you say, ‘He is our God.’ ⁵⁵ But you have not known him. I know him. If I were to say that I do not know him, I would be a liar like you, but I do know him and I keep his word.

And then, finally Jesus lowers the boom:

“Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad.” (56)

⁵⁶ Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad.” ⁵⁷ So the Jews said to him, “You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?” ⁵⁸ Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.” ⁵⁹ So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple.

This was too much.

Not only does this guy claim that God is his father, but he says that Abraham saw his day.
Abraham died 2000 years ago,

“You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?!” (57)

“Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.”

Everything Jesus has said before this point pales in comparison with the force of these words.

Now debate becomes pointless.

Jesus has declared himself to be Yahweh.

There is nothing more to be said.

If anyone else in all of human history had spoken these words,
it would have been blasphemy!

And so, having witnessed open blasphemy (as they think),

there is nothing to be done but to immediately kill Jesus.

Deuteronomy 13 made it clear that blasphemers were to be stoned,
so the Jews reach for the nearest rock pile and come after him.

But Jesus hid himself.

The light of the world now eludes those who walk in darkness.

From this point on, Jesus' interactions with the Jews will be briefer
–and will generally end with an attempt to arrest or kill him.

And so I ask you:

Who is your father?

Whether you are adopted or biological,
you will look like your parents.

Because the family resemblance is not merely physical.

But think about what adoption means.

My brother adopted three children.

They all look like their biological father—at least outwardly.

But in their behavior they more and more resemble my brother.

We have been adopted by God.

We are no longer the heirs of the devil,
we are heirs of God together with Christ.

Outwardly, yes, sometimes we look too much like our old father.

But our old man has died with Christ.

We have been adopted.

We have a new life.

And now we are beginning to look more and more like our new Father.

As Jesus says:

I am the light of the world.

Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.

If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples,

And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.

So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

Whoever is of God hears the words of God.

Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death.