

32. Jesus Taught that He Is the I AM

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to recognize the fact that people are controlled by what is in their hearts. An unbeliever is controlled by sin and will commit evil actions. In contrast, a heart controlled by the love of Christ will have a desire to do those things that are pleasing to God. In our topic today, we are going to see that Jesus taught that He is the I AM.

Jesus had told the Jewish religious leaders that they were of their father, the devil, and did his works. Instead of accepting the truth about their own lives, the religious leaders immediately condemned Jesus. John 8:48-53 says, “Then the Jews answered and said to Him, ‘Do we not say rightly that You are a Samaritan and have a demon?’ Jesus answered, ‘I do not have a demon; but I honor My Father, and you dishonor Me. And I do not seek My *own* glory; there is One who seeks and judges. Most assuredly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he shall never see death.’ Then the Jews said to Him, ‘Now we know that You have a demon! Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and You say, “If anyone keeps My word he shall never taste death.” Are You greater than our father Abraham, who is dead? And the prophets are dead. Who do You make Yourself out to be?’” In their anger, the religious leaders accused Jesus of being a Samaritan and having a demon. They were trying to mock and dishonor Jesus.

Jesus answered the statement and then went on to tell the religious leaders how to have eternal life. Jesus replied that He did not have a demon. Instead, Jesus said that He honored His Father. It was the religious leaders who were dishonoring Him. Then, Jesus went on to explain that He did not seek His own glory. Jesus had said the previous day in John 7:18, ““He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but He who seeks the glory of the One who sent Him is true, and no unrighteousness is in Him.”” Here, Jesus said again that His desire was to honor His Father and not to seek His own glory. Jesus then went on to give a wonderful promise about all that would keep His word. He promised that such individuals would never taste death.

Since the religious leaders did not have spiritual life, they could not understand the fact that they were already spiritually dead. God told Adam in Genesis 2:16-17, “And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, ‘Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.’” Spiritual death is separation from God. Adam said in Genesis 3:10, “So he said, ‘I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself.’” Adam experienced spiritual death the moment that He ate of the fruit and so He hid himself from God. In contrast, Jesus said here that those who receive spiritual life will never experience spiritual death, even though they experience physical death.

Instead of understanding, the religious leaders immediately said that they now knew that Jesus had a demon. They knew that Abraham and the prophets had died. In contrast, Jesus had just said, “If anyone keeps My word he shall never taste death.” Jesus had explained in John 5:24, ““Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.”” Now, Jesus had just

repeated that same thought when He said, “If anyone keeps My word he shall never see death.” We see again the total lack of understanding of spiritual truth by the religious leaders because all they could think about was physical life.

Instead, they reminded Jesus of the fact that Abraham and the prophets had all experienced physical death. Then, they asked Jesus if He was greater than Abraham who had died. They asked if Jesus was greater than the prophets that had died. Finally, they asked Jesus to explain who He thought that He was. Jesus replied to their questions by answering in John 8:54-56, “Jesus answered, ‘If I honor Myself, My honor is nothing. It is My Father who honors Me, of whom you say that He is your God. Yet you have not known Him, but I know Him. And if I say, ‘I do not know Him,’ I shall be a liar like you; but I do know Him and keep His word. Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw *it* and was glad.’” Jesus said that if He chose to honor Himself, His honor would mean nothing. This is a lesson that many Christians today need to learn.

In contrast to honoring Himself, Jesus said that it was the Father who honored Him. This honor would come in words again in the response to the statement of Jesus in John 12:28 where we read that Jesus said, “‘Father, glorify Your name.’ Then a voice came from heaven, *saying*, ‘I have both glorified *it* and will glorify *it* again.’” The Father chose to publicly honor both Jesus and Himself before the Jews by speaking from heaven. Jesus went on to tell the religious leaders here in John 8 that their problem was the fact that they did not know the Father. They claimed that God was their Father but they did not know Him. In contrast, Jesus knew the Father and had come from Him. Jesus had earlier said to these religious leaders in John 5:37, “‘And the Father Himself, who sent Me, has testified of Me. You have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His form.’”

Jesus went on to say that if He denied that He knew the Father, He would be a liar just like those to whom He was speaking. Jesus then explained two things about His relationship to the Father. First, Jesus said that He knew the Father. The word translated “know” means *to see with the eyes, to look at or to understand*. Jesus used this word when He talked about the Father in John 7:29, “‘But I know Him, for I am from Him, and He sent Me.’” Jesus knew the Father because He had come from the Father and He had been sent by the Father. Second, Jesus said that He kept the Word of the Father. The word translated “keep” means *to guard, to observe, to obey or to attend to carefully*. John 14:15 says, “‘If you love Me, keep My commandments.’” Then, Jesus said again in John 15:10, “‘If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love.’” In these verses, we see that Jesus told those who loved Him to obey His commandments just as He obeyed the commandments of the Father.

Then, Jesus said, “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad.” In Hebrews 11, we have the chapter that is known as the Chapter of Heroes of the Faith from the Old Testament. In the verses on Abraham and Sarah, verse 13 says, “These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced *them* and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.” Hebrews explains that Abraham and those before him had seen these promises by faith. Faith was totally lacking in the lives of the

religious leaders with whom Jesus was talking.

John 8:57-59 says, “Then the Jews said to Him, ‘You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?’ Jesus said to them, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM.’ Then they took up stones to throw at Him; but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.” These words caused the Jews to have even greater anger.

Abraham had lived and died more than 2,000 years earlier. Suddenly, the religious leaders had to make a choice. They had to either believe that Jesus was God or they could try to deny that He was God. It was obvious to the Jews that the physical age of Jesus was less than fifty years. At the same time, they understood that Jesus had said that Abraham had seen Him. Genesis 18:22-23 says, “Then the men turned away from there and went toward Sodom, but Abraham still stood before the LORD. And Abraham came near and said, ‘Would You also destroy the righteous with the wicked?’” In these verses, we see that Abraham had talked with Jesus and asked Him to spare the city of Sodom because of the fact that Lot and his family were living in the city. As a result, Jesus had seen Abraham and Abraham had seen Jesus.

However, the next statement of Jesus was even more upsetting to the religious leaders. Jesus said, “Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM.” This statement spoke of the fact that Jesus had always existed. In John 1:3, we see that Jesus was the Creator of all things when that verse said, “All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.” The religious leaders were familiar with the words of Exodus 3:14 which says, “And God said to Moses, ‘I AM WHO I AM.’ And He said, ‘Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’”” The Jews knew that Jesus was saying that He is the true and living God who has always existed and is the Creator of all things.

This was the very fact that the religious leaders were trying to deny. As a result, they were immediately ready to stone Jesus to death. They even picked up stones to throw at Jesus. Leviticus 24:16 says, “‘And whoever blasphemes the name of the LORD shall surely be put to death. All the congregation shall certainly stone him, the stranger as well as him who is born in the land. When he blasphemes the name of the LORD, he shall be put to death.’” The Jews made it very clear that they knew that Jesus was saying He was God. They were going to stone Him for blasphemy since they were unwilling to accept His statement because they did not want to admit He was God.

The word translated “hid” means *to conceal or hide*. It was neither the time nor the way that Jesus would die. His hour had not yet come and Jesus had told Nicodemus that He would die by being lifted up. Jesus was able to conceal His appearance so that He could walk right through the crowd and they could not stop Him. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to use this passage to show that Jesus is God. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to show from Scripture that Jesus is God.