

### Exegesis

**Vs. 46-47** – Jesus advances his offensive further by asking another rhetorical question, “Which of you [convicts] me of sin?” No doubt many thought him guilty, but who among them could show that he was, in fact, guilty? Pilate, a wicked and deceitful man in his own right, admitted to Jesus' innocence (cf. 19:4-6).<sup>1</sup> Thus, in asking this, Jesus puts the burden of proof on his accusers.<sup>2</sup> In doing so, this would reflect poorly on the accusers whose baseless denunciations have yet to find purchase in reality.<sup>3</sup> After all, the Lord has led an exemplary life, and he knows that he's above reproach. Carson's comments are most illuminating when he says, “If the best theological minds, however much they may dislike Jesus' claims and dispute his teachings, find it impossible to marshal convincing reasons that would convict him of sin in (the heavenly) court, should they not begin to question themselves? Perhaps he is telling the truth....”<sup>4</sup> Even if Jesus were to “break” the Sabbath—as he is about to do once again (cf. 5:9, 18; 7:23 9:14)—he would not be in the wrong as he is Lord of the Sabbath and not like man for whom the Sabbath was made (cf. Mar. 2:23-28; 3:2; Lu. 6:6; 13:14; 14:1). Just as God never ceases to labor, Jesus toils away day in and day out. In fact, his greatest deed was accomplished on the Lord's Day (cf. 20:1). It seems, out of all the days of the week, the Lord does his best work on the first. By what standard, then, could they even begin to convict Jesus?

Jesus proceeds to ask an additional rhetorical question, and then, like vs. 43, he also answers it. He says, “And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me? He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God.” Jesus is the literal embodiment of truth. All that is “of God” listen when they hear “God's words.” There should be no reason that they do not believe him. Yet, the fact remains, they not only refuse to believe him, but they won't even listen to him (cf. vs. 43). The religious leader's stubbornness is proof that they are not “of God.” All who are the sheep of God hear the voice of the Shepherd and follow him (cf. 10:22-30).

**Vs. 48** – Clearly addled, the Jews respond by saying, “Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil?” What did they mean by this? When used by a Jew, “Samaritan” is a slur meant to defame someone; this much is clear (cf. 4:9; Lu. 10:25-37). But, given that the topic of paternity is at play in this particular context, the Jews might be implying that Jesus' was an

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<sup>1</sup> Beasley-Murray (1999), p. 136.

<sup>2</sup> Köstenberger (2008), p. 267.

<sup>3</sup> Keener (2012), 1:763.

<sup>4</sup> Carson (1991), p. 354.

illegitimate child. If so, this gives credence to the theory that when the religious leaders spoke of "fornication" before, they suggested that Mary had been unfaithful to Joseph (cf. *see vs. 41 footnotes*).<sup>5</sup> But, as I said before, it is difficult to know how much they knew about Jesus' birth.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, considering that they then say that Jesus is also demon-possessed, it strikes me more as proof that the discussion was quickly devolving and falling apart rather than yet another attack on Mary's virtue.

Things like "Samaritan" and saying Jesus has "a devil" is akin to name-calling. Jesus had won this argument. What more could they do? They couldn't concede, especially not in front of everyone. They had to save face somehow. So, they threw dirt on Jesus, hoping that the people would side with them. Slander, after all, is the last-ditch effort of losers. If Jesus accused them of being the offspring of Satan, they would allege that Jesus wasn't only un-Jewish, but he was also the puppet of demonic forces. How clever of John that this very criticism will be dealt with in the very next scene (cf. 9:16, 29; 10:21). Of all the things that Jesus could've been, the one thing that is least likely is that he was demon-possessed (cf. 7:20; 8:52; 10:20; Mat. 9:34; 12:24; Mr. 3:22; Lu. 11:15). After all, unlike Jesus, Satan's minions aren't known for their good works.

Interestingly, John does not record even one of Jesus' exorcisms. And, save for Judas Iscariot, there are no actual demon possessions (cf. 13:27). Many explanations have been put forth as to why, unlike Matthew, Mark, and Luke, John appears to have intentionally avoided these sorts of scenes. But probably the most convincing theory is that of Thompson, who explains that, in John, "the powers of darkness are characterized not in terms of demonic possession but rather in terms of unbelief and (here) the abandonment of belief."<sup>7</sup> Indeed, the accounts we do have of demonic possession are rare even among the pages of Scripture. And whether or not those sorts of possessions occur today is a difficult question to answer. But, if Thompson is to be believed, it appears that John was trying to show us that one of the most potent and prevalent forms of demonic possession is nonbelief (cf. 1 Jn. 2:18-23; 3:4-15). We know of only one Legion (Lu. 8:30), but there have been untold masses who have been willingly possessed by an unbelieving spirit. By refusing to believe Jesus, these religious leaders showed they were nothing more than demons clothed in human skin.

**Vs. 49-51** – If their slanderous allegations had any effect on Jesus, the narrative doesn't tell us. In fact, Jesus seems altogether unaffected as he causally ignores their "Samaritan" comment

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<sup>5</sup> Carson (1991), p. 355; Keener (2012), 1:764, also agrees with Carson but adds that their words might imply they knew of Jesus' extended stay with the Samaritans (cf. 4:40).

<sup>6</sup> Morris (1995), p. 414.

<sup>7</sup> Thompson (2015), p. 193.

and simply counters with, "I have not a devil; but I honor my Father, and [you] do dishonor me." A bare denial was sufficient because, as Jesus points out, he has done nothing but glorify his "Father," whereas these Jews have done nothing but "dishonor" the Father's Son. And according to Jewish law at this time, "rejection of someone's messenger was tantamount to rejection of the sender as well."<sup>8</sup> If there were demons in the room, they were present in very ones who sought to "dishonor" Jesus by seeking to take his life. What better way to disgrace someone than to not only kill a person's messenger but to also kill that person's son (cf. Mar. 12:1-12)?

Jesus, yet again, refers to his subservience to the Father by saying, "I seek not [my] own glory: [but] there is one that seeks [it] and [he] judges." Jesus' motivation for doing what he's done was because he sought to "honor" the Father and not to hoard all the glory for himself. However, this does not mean that Christ will not be glorified. Though never by his own hands, Christ is always exalted. Paul even says that God is the one who has so dignified Jesus that, eventually, every knee will bow before him, and every tongue will confess that he is Lord (cf. Phil. 2:9-11). "The irony is that in this Gospel Jesus glorifies the Father and receives glory through the cross—truly a glorification his opponents would not seek for themselves."<sup>9</sup> And this truth is so definitive that Jesus says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, if a man keeps my saying, he shall never see death." And, of course, when he uses the term "death," he isn't indicating the loss of life that most of us will experience (cf. Heb. 9:27). Barring a few notable exceptions, such as Enoch, Elijah, and those believers who are alive at Jesus' second coming, everyone will die at least once. Thus, what Jesus is referring to is the second death in which all unbelievers will be eternally separated from God at the end (cf. Rev. 20:11-15; 21:8). Just as the first death separated all of mankind for the span of a lifetime (cf. Gen. 2:16; 3:22-24), the second death will separate every unredeemed man and woman for the span of all eternity. Dishonor the Son by ignoring his saying, and only damnation awaits you (cf. vs. 43). But anyone who honors the Son by "abiding" in his word will be rescued from this most unenviable fate (cf. v. 31-32; 11:25-26). Peter knew this as far back as 6:68; Jesus alone has the words of eternal life. "The assurance relates to life which physical death cannot extinguish, and so to the death of the spirit; the believer receives eternal life, i.e., the life of the kingdom of God, over which death has no power and which is destined for resurrection."<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Köstenberger (2008), p. 269.

<sup>9</sup> Keener (2012), 1:765.

<sup>10</sup> Beasley-Murray (1999), p. 137.

## VIDEO DESCRIPTION

Wednesday Night Live | John | Week 9

Text: John 8:46-51

In the wake of Jesus calling the Jews children of the devil, they begin to lob groundless allegations in retaliation. They've clearly lost this argument, so they resort to slander to save face. But, in doing so, they only further prove they are possessed of an unbelieving spirit. They simply refuse to accept the truth that Jesus was trying to give them. It seems that the most potent and prevalent form of demonic possession is unbelief.

Pastor's manuscript can be found here: