

JOHN 8:38-47

“I speak the things which I have seen with *My* Father; therefore you also do the things which you heard from *your* father.’ They answered and said to Him, ‘Abraham is our father.’ Yeshua said to them, ‘If you are Abraham’s children, do the deeds of Abraham. But as it is, you are seeking to kill Me, a man who has told you the truth, which I heard from God; this Abraham did not do. You are doing the deeds of your father.’ They said to Him, ‘We were not born of fornication; we have one Father: God.’ Yeshua said to them, ‘If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and have come from God, for I have not even come on My own initiative, but He sent Me. Why do you not understand what I am saying? *It is* because you cannot hear My word. You are of *your* father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own *nature*, for he is a liar and the father of lies. But because I speak the truth, you do not believe Me. Which one of you convicts Me of sin? If I speak truth, why do you not believe Me? He who is of God hears the words of God; for this reason you do not hear *them*, because you are not of God.’”

In previous discussion, Yeshua spoke to His followers—which were notably indeed “those Jews who had believed Him” (John 8:31a)—about the need for abiding in His word and His truth (John 8:31b-32). Obviously as He was speaking to His followers, there were detractors nearby, as the Messiah would explain the difference between those in slavery to sin (John 8:33-34), and how a child of God has a different status than such a slave (John 8:35). Yeshua forthrightly declares, “So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed” (John 8:36), as belief in Him will reckon men and women free from the condemnation and guilt of sin. Yeshua recognizes how many present regarded themselves as being of the seed or offspring of Abraham, and thus inherently free, yet they seek to kill Him (John 8:37)—surely something that is not becoming of those who regard themselves as demonstrating the faith example of the Patriarch.

The statements which follow in John 8:38-47, mainly have Yeshua comparing and contrasting the character and motives of His detractors—presumably among the Jewish religious leadership—and Himself. Yeshua is one who is “from God” (John 8:40, 42, 47); Yeshua’s opponents, thinking that they are children of Abraham (John 8:39), are actually out to serve themselves, and are in reality children of the Devil (John 8:44). While the discussion of John 8:38-47 mainly involves the motives of Yeshua versus those of His opponents, there are some statements which appear, which do beg some questions about the nature of the Messiah.

The sentence, “I speak of what I have seen with my Father, and you do what you have heard from your father” (John 8:38, RSV), is something which definitely begs a closer look. Here, you have Yeshua contrasting His experience of what He has seen with His Heavenly Father, *ha egō heōraka para tō patri lalō* (ἃ ἐγὼ ἐώρακα παρὰ τῷ πατρὶ λαλῶ), “the things I have seen with the Father I speak” (Brown and Comfort)—to the actions of the opponents, *kai humeis oun ēkousate para tou patros poieiete* (καὶ ὑμεῖς οὖν ἃ ἠκούσατε παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς ποιεῖτε), “and you therefore the things you heard from the (your) father you do” (Brown and Comfort).¹⁴⁸ As is witnessed in the slight extrapolation of the NIV, “I am telling you what I have seen in the Father’s presence,” there are interpreters who have taken John 8:38a as reflective of Yeshua’s pre-existence. Bruce comments,

¹⁴⁸ Brown and Comfort, 354.

“Jesus’ claim to speak the things which he had ‘seen’ in the Father’s presence (verse 38) echoes his language in John 6:46: ‘he who comes from God, he has seen the Father’. The truth which he teaches is heavenly truth, although it is presented for acceptance by men and women on earth. But no one can speak of heavenly realities except one who has come down from heaven and imparts to his hearers on earth what he has seen and heard in that transcendent realm (cf. John 3:11-13).”¹⁴⁹

A second remark in this dialogue, necessary to probe regarding the nature of the Messiah, appears in John 8:42, which is mainly intended to highlight how His opponents—who think they were serving God—were really not: “If God were your Father, you would love me, for I proceeded and came forth from God; I came not of my own accord, but he sent me” (RSV). Yeshua’s origins are stated in the source text as *egō gar ek tou Theou exēlthon* (ἐγὼ γὰρ ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐξῆλθον), “for-I from – God came forth” (Brown and Comfort). Rather than being a child of fornication (John 8:41), Yeshua’s origins are from God. Morris describes, “He came out from God,” also stating “the tense points to a moment of time, the incarnation.”¹⁵⁰ That Yeshua is not out only for His own self-serving interests—in stark contrast to any of the gods, goddesses, or other supernatural entities which would come down from the Heavens to the Earth—is clear from the dialogue transcribed with *kai ekō oude gar ap’ emautou elēlutha, all’ ekeinos me apesteilen* (καὶ ἤκω· οὐδὲ γὰρ ἀπ’ ἐμαυτοῦ ἐλήλυθα, ἀλλ’ ἐκεῖνός με ἀπέστειλεν), “and I come for-not from myself I have come but that one sent-me” (Brown and Comfort).¹⁵¹ Once again, our investigation into the nature of Yeshua, particularly as seen in the Gospel of John, is to widely involve what it means for Him to be sent to Earth from the Heavenly Father.

JOHN 8:48-59

“The Jews answered and said to Him, ‘Do we not say rightly that You are a Samaritan and have a demon?’ Yeshua answered, ‘I do not have a demon; but I honor My Father, and you dishonor Me. But I do not seek My glory; there is One who seeks and judges. Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he will never see death.’ The Jews said to Him, ‘Now we know that You have a demon. Abraham died, and the prophets *also*; and You say, “If anyone keeps My word, he will never taste of death.” Surely You are not greater than our father Abraham, who died? The prophets died too; whom do You make Yourself out to be?’ Yeshua answered, ‘If I glorify Myself, My glory is nothing; it is My Father who glorifies Me, of whom you say, “He is our God”; and you have not come to know Him, but I know Him; and if I say that I do not know Him, I will 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.’ So the Jews said to Him, ‘You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?’ Yeshua said to them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am.’ Therefore they picked up stones to throw at Him, but Yeshua hid Himself and went out of the temple.”

Yeshua has just informed His opponents, “you are not of God” (John 8:47), which they doubtlessly took as not only an insult, but also as being rather impudent and arrogant from someone who had not been formally trained as a rabbi or religious leader (John 7:15). The Jewish leaders retort back with, “Aren’t we right in saying that you are a Samaritan and demon-possessed?” (John 8:48, NIV). Yeshua accused of being a Samaritan would immediately be taken as a slur, but more importantly regard how the Jewish leaders present thought that Yeshua was an aberration. The reason Yeshua was rejected, was because the religious leaders

¹⁴⁹ Bruce, *John*, 198.

¹⁵⁰ Morris, *John*, 462.

¹⁵¹ Brown and Comfort, 354.