

SEEING JESUS IN JOHN

WEEK SEVENTEEN: THE CLAIMS OF JESUS

READING

48 The people retorted, “You Samaritan devil! Didn’t we say all along that you were possessed by a demon?” 49 “No,” Jesus said, “I have no demon in me. For I honor my Father—and you dishonor me. 50 And though I have no wish to glorify myself, God is going to glorify me. He is the true judge. 51 I tell you the truth, anyone who obeys my teaching will never die!” 52 The people said, “Now we know you are possessed by a demon. Even Abraham and the prophets died, but you say, ‘Anyone who obeys my teaching will never die!’ 53 Are you greater than our father Abraham? He died, and so did the prophets. Who do you think you are?” 54 Jesus answered, “If I want glory for myself, it doesn’t count. But it is my Father who will glorify me. You say, ‘He is our God,’ 55 but you don’t even know him. I know him. If I said otherwise, I would be as great a liar as you! But I do know him and obey him. 56 Your father Abraham rejoiced as he looked forward to my coming. He saw it and was glad.” 57 The people said, “You aren’t even fifty years old. How can you say you have seen Abraham?” 58 Jesus answered, “I tell you the truth, before Abraham was even born, I am!” 59 At that point they picked up stones to throw at him. But Jesus was hidden from them and left the Temple. John 8 (NLT)

TEACHING

In this story, Jesus makes some radical claims and as a result the crowd gets very angry – angry enough that by the end they want to kill him! So, what did Jesus claim that made the crowd so angry? In the text we see two things:

1) Jesus claimed that his teaching had the power to keep people from death. The crowd was correct in pointing out that everyone, even the great heroes in the Old Testament, dies. But Jesus wasn’t talking about living forever here on earth. Jesus was talking about the fullness of life that can be experienced here and now and the forever life that will be experience there and then—in heaven—with him!

2) Jesus claimed to be “before Abraham.” In fact, he used the phrase “I am” which was the name God used for himself when he revealed himself to Moses. Don’t miss what this means: Jesus was claiming to be God! Many people think Jesus was just a good teacher, a nice man, or a good example. But Jesus claimed to be more than that...he claimed to be God and that’s ultimately why he was killed. Jesus wasn’t confused about his identity and we shouldn’t be either. Jesus is the eternal God!

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RESPONSE

OPENING QUESTION(S):

- Have you ever heard someone claim something that you didn't believe was true? What was it and how did you determine if it was true or not?

TODDLERS/PRE-K:

- In this story, who tells others he is God?
- In this story, what kind of life does Jesus promise?

CHILDREN:

- In this story, what two claims did Jesus make?
- Why were people so angry about those claims?
- In this story, what kind of life does Jesus promise?

TEENAGERS:

- What two claims did Jesus make?
- What do those claims mean to you?

ADULTS:

- What does the fullness of life look like here and now for you?
- How are helping your family understand the radical claims of Jesus?

PRAYER

God, thank you for the truth found in Jesus. Thank you that he didn't come just to be a good person or a great example. Thank you that Jesus came as God to become man so that he might live perfect in our place and then take our place on the cross, providing hope and salvation for us all. Help me to consider, believe and defend the claims of Jesus. Help me to live my life by those claims. Thank you that you do not ask me to do this on my own, but you give me your grace, your Spirit and my church family. In Jesus name, Amen.

NEXT LEVEL (ADDITIONAL OPTIONAL TEACHING)

In the opening verse, the Jewish crowd makes two of their own claims. One is natural and one is supernatural. They claim Jesus is a Samaritan and they claim Jesus is demon possessed. Jesus refutes the second claim, but he doesn't address the first. The Samaritans were considered half-breeds and the hatred between Jews and Samaritans was intense and long lived. Commentators aren't in agreement on why Jesus was called a Samaritan, but it may have been in reference to questions around paternity, it may have been in response to feeling like their heritage was being challenged by Jesus, or it may have been an insult related to the time he spent with the Samaritan woman in John 4.