

## John, Part 38: Paternity Test

**John 8:36 ESV** 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.” 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. **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.”

- I. There is a great question to be answered in our text today. To put it in the words of an old Toby Keith song, that question is, “Who’s your daddy?”
  - A. This is by no means a new question. In the past several discussions from John 8, it was of supreme importance to the Jewish leaders as it pertained to Jesus.
    1. In verse 19 they ask, “Where is your Father?”
    2. Verse 27 tells us that they did not understand that Jesus had been speaking to them about the Father all along.
    3. In verse 33, the Pharisees claim that Abraham, the person at the beginning of the covenant between God and the Jews, was their Father; something will they continue to assert in today’s passage.
      - a) They further claim that because of their status as Abraham’s progeny, they have no need of being “set free”, even though Christ has offered to set them free by telling them the truth. They have the audacity to say that they **never** been enslaved to anyone.
      - b) But as Pastor Dave pointed out last week, they conveniently forgot about the Egyptians, or the countless times they were subjugated by foreign powers in the book of Judges. What about when the Northern kingdom of Israel was dispersed by Assyria; or the Southern kingdom’s exile in Babylon for 70 years? Weren’t they under the thumb of the Medes, Persians, and Greeks? At the time of this discussion, Israel was occupied by Rome! I’m assuming these guys didn’t get great grades in history!
      - c) Next, Jesus compares fathers with these men. “I speak of what I have seen with **my** Father, and you do what you have heard from **your** father.”
  - B. Repeating verse 33, in verse 39 they say, “**Abraham** is our father.”

- C. I know that no one is likely to admit it, but have you ever been at home on a weekday afternoon (perhaps you were sick or enjoying a three day weekend) and had the misfortune of being sucked into watching the “Maury” show? (See, I told you that you wouldn’t admit it!) If you insist on pretending innocence, let me enlighten you as to how this “cultural masterpiece” works...
1. Every afternoon, for countless years, the plot has been exactly the same. A woman sits on Maury’s couch in tears, recounting how her deadbeat boyfriend impregnated her, but now he denies being the child’s father.
  2. Next, they parade the father out, who is always adamantly insisting, either because of the woman’s infidelity (or any number of other extenuating circumstances) that he absolutely, positively **cannot** be the child’s father.
  3. So after intense drama in the form of loud and highly-opinionated audience participation, copious amounts of bleeped swearing, and an occasional fist fight or two thrown in for fun, Maury sits, envelope in lap, waiting to reveal the scientific results of a paternity test to the disputing couple.
  4. He opens the envelope, pauses for an emotional effect, and says, “Bobby Joe, you **are** (or even occasionally **are not**) the father!”
- D. Usually, before the results are read, the mother has insisted that the appearance of the eyes of the child, the ears, or the mouth are clear evidence that Bobby Joe **was** the Father, which he (of course) passionately denies.
1. But now qualified professionals have used science; looking not simply on the **surface**, but to something internal, scientific and indisputable to prove the true identity of the child’s father.
  2. While many people may have similarly shaped ears, or the same eye color, DNA testing is up to 99% accurate in determining exact paternity. (<http://family.findlaw.com/paternity/paternity-tests-blood-tests-and-dna.html>)
- II. So here are the Pharisees, insisting for the second time in 6 short verses that Abraham (and only Abraham) is their father! But Jesus responds by opening the metaphorical envelope, and submitting the results of a spiritual paternity test.
- A. **“If you were Abraham's children, you would be doing the works Abraham did...”** “Abraham...is **not** your father!” Jesus has not been persuaded by the external similarities; things like national pride, festival participation, or some “kept ceremony” like circumcision. He has looked where he is an **expert**: upon their hearts. He regards all external similarities to Abraham to be merely coincidental.
1. The heart was always the critical issue for Jesus when dealing with religious types (or anyone else for that matter)!
  2. **Matthew 23:25 ESV** “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean **the outside** of the cup and the plate, **but inside** they are full of greed and self-indulgence. **26** You blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and the plate, that the outside also may be clean. **27** “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which **outwardly appear beautiful**, but **within** are full of dead people's bones and all uncleanness. **28** So you also **outwardly** appear righteous to others, but **within** you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

3. Outside vs inside; outward appearance vs. inner truth; Jesus will never be impressed by the outer veneer of respectability and morality, but rather, the inner integrity produced by believing and obedient faith.
- B. Even John the Baptist, the prophetic forerunner to Jesus' earthly ministry was unimpressed by the claims of Jewish connection to Father Abraham!
1. When the Pharisees came to scope out his ministry one day, look at what he said to them:
  2. **Matthew 3:7 ESV** But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? **8 Bear fruit in keeping with repentance. 9 And do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father,' for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham. 10** Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.
- C. John was emphasizing *inner* repentance; not *outward* appearance or pedigree.
- III. So the question arises, how were these men so dissimilar to Abraham? In order to better understand, let's reacquaint ourselves with Abraham for a moment.
- A. In the book of Genesis, shortly after God dispersed the nations at the Tower of Babel by confusing their languages, he finds this man living in the plains of modern-day Iraq named Abram (his name would later be changed by God to Abraham). He speaks to him and gives him both a **command** and a **promise**:
1. **Genesis 12:1 ESV** Now the Lord said to Abram, "**Go** from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. **2** And I will make of you a great nation, and **I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. 3 I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.**"
    - a) The command of God was to go. No map or GPS coordinates were given. Just the promise that God would show him how to get there, and that his obedience would be accompanied with unspeakable covenant blessing on his life.
    - b) What was Abram's response? Genesis 12:4 says, "So Abram went as the LORD had told him..." He immediately obeyed.
  2. A few chapters later, in Genesis 15, God again visits Abram, reiterating his promise. But Abram responds by reminding the Lord that there is a problem. He is childless. Even if God should bestow these many blessings upon him, what good will it be? No one will inherit the blessings when he dies.
    - a) But God makes an astounding promise to him. He would father a son with his wife Sarai who would inherit the promise! This is incredible because Abram is 75 years old at the time! Sarai is 65! And the promise wouldn't be fulfilled for 25 years! But the **promise** of the miracle isn't even as astonishing as Abram's **response** to God's word.
    - b) **Genesis 15:6 ESV** And he believed the Lord, and he (God) counted it to him (Abram) as righteousness.

3. Because God is a god for whom nothing shall be impossible, the proper response to his voice is **always** to believe and obey. Anything less is sin.
- B. Now, compare the way the Pharisees responded to the voice of God. **John 8:40** 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. 41a** You are doing the works your father did.” We’ll discuss the identity of their “father” in a moment.
1. Abraham believed. But Jesus had told the Jewish leaders that unless they believe in him as God, they would die in their sin. In **belief**, Abraham was counted righteous. In **unbelief**, these men would be condemned.
  2. Abraham obeyed. These men have been told by Jesus that his word “has no place” in them (8:37); and that they “cannot bear” to hear his word (8:43). In **obedience**, Abraham was blessed. In **rebellion** against the living, revealed Word of God in Jesus, these men will be cursed to eternal hell.
- C. There was no mistaking it. These men had zero spiritual DNA to connect them with Abraham at all! But they weren’t done...
- IV. **John 8:41b ESV** They said to him, “We were not born of sexual immorality. We have one Father—even God.”
- A. Jesus has kicked stool of confidence out from under their claims of superior heritage, and so they turn from protesting on the basis of their **earthly** lineage, to their **spiritual** one.
1. What do they mean in this reference to “sexual immorality”? All throughout the OT (esp. the prophetic writings), the unfaithfulness of idolatry is portrayed by the image of an unfaithful spouse. A couple examples...
    - a) **Isaiah 1:21a ESV** How the faithful city has become a **whore**, she who was full of justice!
    - b) **Jeremiah 3:8a ESV** She saw that for all the **adulteries** of that faithless one, Israel, I had sent her away with a decree of divorce.
  2. In complete self-righteousness, the religious leaders are protesting that they are not guilty of such things! They have never been idolaters! They have done all their righteous acts for God alone! In the flesh they are the very descendants of Abraham, but spiritually, they are the offspring of God!
  3. What they failed to understand is that idolatry is a crime of the heart and not just to literally bow the knee to a graven image or statue! They had idolized their traditions, their temple, their heritage, their law...they had idolized themselves and their self-perceived, works-based righteousness.
- B. But on the evidence of these wicked, idolatrous hearts, Jesus opens another metaphorical envelope, and says “God is **not** your Father!” **John 8:42 ESV** 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**.”
1. Once again Jesus looks internally for evidence of their spiritual DNA and deflates all the arrogance of their pride, telling them that their is no evidence of any relation to God.
  2. “If God were your Father”, he says, “you would love what God loves - namely me! You would recognize the resemblance I bear to my Father and realize that he sent me!

- C. Twice now Jesus has dismissed any false hope they had as to their heritage. Abraham is not your father. God is certainly not your Father! If not God or Abraham, then **who is** the father of these men who are the “cream of the crop” of Jewish society? Jesus uses a rhetorical question to point to their core problem and interprets for them the ramifications of that problem.
- V. **John 8:43 ESV** Why do you not understand what I say? It is because **you cannot bear to hear my word.**
- A. Whenever Jesus spoke, there was a deep chasm fixed between his words and their ability to understand. But this wasn't because they were stupid. Rather, their spiritual genetics made it impossible. A frog would have better luck flying! A butterfly would more easily fight crocodiles than these guys could have understood spiritual things. Why? Jesus opens the final envelope...
- B. **John 8:44 ESV** You are of your father **the devil**, and your will is to do **your father's desires**. No more need mystery or self-delusion. The devil himself, not God nor Abraham is their father! There is a perfect genetic match. They will to do exactly as their father desires. They are “chips off the old block”!
1. **“He was a murderer from the beginning”**. John chapters 5 and 7 tell us that the Jewish leaders were already plotting the execution of the Son of God.
  2. When Jesus exposes their dirty little plot, they deny it with blasphemies!
    - a) **John 7:19b ESV** “Why do you seek to kill me?” **20** The crowd answered, **“You have a demon! Who is seeking to kill you?”**
    - b) What they did, they did in shadowy secrecy. Jesus called them on this as well, saying to them of their father the devil, he **“does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him.”**
  3. As children of darkness, they are repulsed by truth, and avoid it like the plague. They were always attempting to make themselves comfortable amid lies and self-delusion.
    - a) Is this not the pattern of the devil? Isaiah 14 is a prophecy about the downfall of the king of Babylon, but many Bible scholars believe that it echoes the way Satan was ousted from heaven...
    - b) **Isaiah 14:13 ESV** You said in your heart, ‘I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God I will set my throne on high; I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far reaches of the north; **14** I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; **I will make myself like the Most High.**’ What pride, arrogance and self-importance! But this was exactly the very nature of the smug, self-righteous Jewish authorities. “Through our own religious perfection, we will be like the Most High!”
- C. When it came to their intention to execute Christ, they were obviously lying, which should not surprise us at all. In fact, it is Jesus' second point of analysis of the “father” of the men standing before him...
- D. **“When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.”**
1. As satan is a liar, so are his followers; all of those who have rejected the Lordship of Jesus. They lie to you, they lie about you. They lie about their importance and their achievements. They lie about their needs, their

insecurities and their addictions. They lie to God and they lie about God. But most of all, they lie to themselves.

- a) You may say that that is unfair. You knew an unchristian man or woman who lived and died as a person of great apparent integrity; honest in business, faithful to their spouse, a person of their word.
  - b) But did they ever confess to the crushing weight of their own sin, shame and guilt? Did they ever acknowledge that there was a God who created, governs, and jealously and righteously demands exclusivity in our worship? Did they confess to the many ways they have apathetically discarded his laws and decrees? Did they confess the many idols that had long ago displaced God from the throne of their hearts?
2. If they didn't then they were liars of the worst kind. Just like the Jewish leaders in Jesus day were.
    - a) Just like I was in the moment before the Holy Spirit awakened me to the truth of my need for Christ. Just like you were before your eyes were opened to see that the man who hung bleeding and dying on a cross was hanging there in your place.
    - b) Just as some of you are today, gambling your souls over the fires of hell.

VI. **John 8:45 ESV** 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.**"

- A. Jesus makes two powerful statements.
  1. First, because he speaks the truth, they are incapable of hearing him. Truth is not their native tongue.
  2. Second, only those who are born of God **can** hear, receive and understand the words of God.
- B. Who's your daddy this morning? How do you know? Are you looking at external similarities that you think makes you look like him, or is his DNA found in every cell of your body, soul and spirit?
  1. That DNS is found only in those who are born of the Spirit according to John 3 and Romans 8. You can't modify your behavior enough to become a child of God. You can't inherit a pedigree from your parents or grandparents. You must be born again.
  2. Without this, you can be assured that, no matter how you feel, and no matter how much you deny it or wish it wasn't true, you are of your father the devil. But that doesn't have to be the way your story ends. A great and marvelous promise has been given to you in Christ...
- C. **John 6:37 ESV** All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. How do you come to him? You must cry out to God for mercy and an awakening in your Spirit. **He will not turn you away.** As Jesus said, "You will know the truth and the truth will set you free" and "whom the Son sets free, is free indeed"
- D. Would you like to pray with me this morning to become free? To become new? To be born into a new and living hope?