

“Sons of Satan” (Jn. 8:37-59)

1. Their Disposition as Abraham’s Sons (37-47) (Ex 3:10-14)
 - a. Murderous:
 - i. They want to kill Him (37-38) thus His Word had no place in them. Satan is a liar and a murderer and he is their father (44).
 - ii. “The devil here was named as both a murderer and a liar and therefore the source of murder and lying (8:44). The reference is obviously to the Garden of Eden text where the deceit of the serpent/devil led to the “death” of Adam and Eve ... [See Further Study for internal footnote in this quotation.] As a result of the actions of the Jews in relation to his coming, Jesus judged, they made it self-evident that they were children of a different father: the liar and the murderer (John 8:44).”¹
 - b. Presumptuous:
 - i. They claim Abraham as their father (39). Jesus acknowledged that they were physically/biologically descendants of Abraham but spiritually/salvifically speaking they were not! John the Baptist affirmed this (Mat. 3:1-12) and Paul confirmed this (e.g. Ro. 2:28-9; 9:6; Gal. 3:28-29; 6:16).
 - ii. Expound (optional): Remnant/kingdom taken from Jews and given to Gentiles/Jonah and Assyria/Rahab and spies/the good Samaritan etc. **Mat. 21:43!** God’s covenant people include all and only those who trust the LORD and His living Word!
 - iii. On what do you depend to be a legitimate child of God? 1 Jn. 3:1.
 - iv. They claim to know God but Jesus cites evidence they actually are fighting against God.
 - v. They claimed to be free not unlike many in our current society. Politicians, celebs, teachers, and even preachers claim autonomy and celebrate their prerogatives of freedom when it is true slavery.
 - vi. Many claim freedom from religion – not *of* or *for* it.
 - vii. They want to kill Jesus, refuse to believe Him, but could not accuse Him of sin (46).
 - viii. Their disposition was disbelief, hatred, blindness, deception, selfishness, and pride. Jesus’ disposition is love, truth, righteousness, patience, courage, wisdom, etc.
 - c. Slanderous:
 - i. The truth is both glorious and ominous. The truth is often met with disdain or neglected altogether for fear of facing the facts. This is a rather negative passage – ironically, because the *personification of truth* told the truth! The ultimate truth was met with animosity.
 - ii. In the Eastern world, honor is still of the highest values in culture. To dishonor Jesus by dismissing Him as a Samaritan and having a demon was of the highest dishonor.
 - iii. With regard to the Samaritan accusation, Jesus would later turn it into a compliment so to speak (Lu. 10:25-37). With regard to the demon possession, Jesus turned the insult directed at Him to a condemnation directly at them.
 - iv. Rather than having a demon, Jesus perfectly did God’s will whereas they were illegitimate sons who were disobedient.
 - v. He had already called Himself the Son of Man (28) and here (49) He affirms He is the Son of God as in v. 23. As the argument progresses, He will actually claim God honoring Him (54)!
 - vi. Comfort of Lies and Pain of the Truth: Consider v. 36 again. It is the truth of Jesus’ person and work who sets us free and that is uncomfortable at first. It is downright

¹ Ibid. 305–306.

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painful to swallow the truth that we are depraved. It is often pain that leads us to consider the truth. Conversely, those whose father is the devil cling to lies because they seem comfortable. Read v. 45. Many people are not honest because the truth offends – Jesus was not concerned about such offenses because unless they accept the truth they are condemned; and they cannot accept the hard truth unless they are first offended by it.

2. Their Consternation at Abraham’s God (48-59)

- a. They call Him possessed (48). Always looking to dismiss, deny, defame, or destroy whatever/whoever threatened their position.
- b. Jesus claimed righteousness again (49-50)
- c. Jesus claimed authority over death again (51). Who abides “keeps” will not see death. →
- d. Therefore, the One who died for us and then defeated death (For it could not keep a grip on Him!) (Acts 2:24) commands that one must believe in such to have everlasting life! Cf. v. 31, 37, & 3:16 for example.
- e. A great challenge (53). They are getting the point but not trusting that it is true.
- f. A Superior Retort (54-8). He stated that the Father honored Him! He had previously used Moses as a witness to himself (5:46) and now He uses Abraham (56).
- g. The Father honors Jesus because unlike the first Adam who chose the lie of comfort, knowledge, possessions, etc. – Jesus chose the path of the torturous Cross. The Jews had aligned themselves with the first Adam who believed the serpent’s lie and rejected the last Adam (1 Cor. 15:45) who trusted God with perfect faith (Mark 14:36).
- h. Hung up on literalism again, they complain stating an obvious yet irrelevant point that Abraham was long dead. It’s fairly obvious that Jesus referred to the promise Abraham looked to and rejoiced. Each of us has had an anticipated event to which we “saw” and rejoiced.
- i. Let’s read vv. 57-58. Boom. I’ll never forget how jubilant I was when I first read this passage. Even w/o understanding the OT referent, it is obvious Jesus claimed deity!
- j. “Truly, truly I say to you, before Abraham was, I Am.” Is the LORD God Almighty greater than Abraham?
- k. They claimed to be sons of Abraham and sons of God – Jesus claimed to be God of Abraham! V. 59 Mic drop moment w/o the mic drop. Jesus didn’t flaunt His superior reasoning, morality, obedience, freedom, and faith, nor point out they could not harm Him till His hour had come. “They were not in charge of Jesus’ life or death. Instead, he faded from their sight as he intriguingly hid himself, left the temple that was supposed to be the Father’s house (cf. 2:16), and frustrated the pseudo children of Abraham in their angry, rock-throwing, murderous endeavor to end quickly the story of Jesus (8:59).”²

² Borchert, G. L. (1996). [*John 1-11*](#) (Vol. 25A, p. 309). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

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Further Study:

(Gen 3:1–4; cf. Wis 2:24; Rom 5:12). From that point lying and murder were a pattern of human life (cf. the Cain story in Gen 4:1–15; also 1 John 3:11–14).¹⁹¹

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Are you a slave or an heir? Is your father God or the devil? Do you abide in Christ or dismiss His claim of being the Almighty God? In His argument with the Jews, Jesus had to correct their assumptions of their spiritual status and His own. They had appealed to their status in Abraham as his descendants thus assuming a chosen position in God. Jesus had said it was one’s status *in Him* which determines a chosen position in God. They presumed liberty yet He pointed out their enslavement to sin. They said Abraham and God were their fathers yet Jesus told them the devil was their father. They claimed Jesus had a demon and He claimed that He was honored by God. He claimed to be greater than Abraham and, indeed, claimed to be God and they tried to kill Him, picking up stones as He simply hid from them leaving the Temple and leaving them enraged. In life and in truth, it doesn’t end well for all. However, for all in Christ it ends with everlasting life!

¹⁹¹ In the Jerusalem Talmud there is a hint at Gen 5:3 of the rabbinic/Gnostic theory that Cain was the offspring of Eve and an angel of darkness sometimes called Samael, thus freeing Adam from the responsibility for sin. Such a perspective is much more negative than the ἡσυχία/ἡσυχιον texts of 1 Tim 2:2, 11–12, where the question is one of living orderly, “quiet” lives. For an interpretation of these pastoral texts see G. Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1988), 63, 72–73. This entire passage of 1 Tim 2:8–15 has troubled interpreters for centuries, to say nothing of the idea that salvation is linked to bearing children, which does not likely refer to the birth of Christ, as some have argued. In Rom 5:12 Paul did not let Adam off the hook for sin. For arguments on John 8:44 see the unusual arguments of J. R. Díaz, “Palestinian Targum and New Testament,” *NovT* 6 (1963): 75–80; cf. Brown, *John*, 1.358. For further discussions on this text see A. R. C. Leaney, “The Johannine Paraclete and the Qumran Scrolls,” in *John and Qumran*, ed. J. Charlesworth (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1972), 54–55; N. Dahl, trans., “The Murderer and His Father (Joh 8:44),” *NorTT* 64 (1963): 129–62; J. Thomas, “Menteur et homicide depuis l’origine? Lecture de Jean 8:44,” *Christus* 27 (1980): 225–35.