

John 8:37

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

I know that ye are Abraham's seed; but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you.

Analysis

I know that ye are Abraham's seed—Jesus concedes the biological fact they claimed (v.33). The verb 'know' (οἶδα/oida) indicates certain knowledge—He doesn't dispute their genealogy. Physical descent from Abraham is real but, as He'll prove, spiritually irrelevant. The conjunction 'but' (ἀλλὰ/alla) introduces devastating contrast between biological heritage and spiritual reality.

Ye seek to kill me—The present tense ζητεῖτε (zēteite, 'you are seeking') indicates ongoing, active intent. This isn't hypothetical future possibility but present murderous intention. Jesus perceives what they haven't yet enacted but are internally plotting. The verb 'kill' (ἀποκτεῖναι/apokteinai) is blunt, literal—they want Him dead. Within months they'll succeed (chapter 19).

Because my word hath no place in you—The causal conjunction ὅτι (hoti, 'because') links their murderous intent to spiritual condition. The phrase 'hath no place' (οὐ χωρεῖ/ou chōrei) literally means 'does not make room/advance/progress.' The verb χωρέω (chōreō) can mean to make space, to advance, to be received. Jesus's λόγος (logos, 'word') finds no receptive soil in their hearts—it cannot take root, grow, or bear fruit (cf. the parable of the sower, Mark 4:1-20).

This verse diagnoses the root cause of unbelief and hostility toward Christ: hardened hearts that refuse God's word. The problem isn't intellectual (they understood His claims) but volitional and spiritual. They rejected truth not from ignorance but from rebellion. Their claim to be Abraham's children (v.33) is

exposed as hollow—true children of Abraham would receive God's word, not seek to murder His messenger.

Historical Context

The plot to kill Jesus had been developing since John 5:16-18, when Jewish leaders 'sought to kill him' for healing on the Sabbath and calling God His Father. By John 7:1, 'the Jews sought to kill him,' forcing Jesus to avoid Judea. At the Feast of Tabernacles (chapters 7-8), this murderous intent intensified. The Pharisees and chief priests sent officers to arrest Him (7:32), though they returned empty-handed (7:45-46). The authorities' hostility stemmed from Jesus's claims (deity, authority to forgive sins, redefining Sabbath) and His threat to their power structures.

Jesus's indictment—'my word has no place in you'—echoed prophetic critiques of Israel. Isaiah 6:9-10 describes judicial hardening: 'Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not.' Jeremiah 6:10: 'Their ear is uncircumcised, and they cannot hearken: behold, the word of the LORD is unto them a reproach; they have no delight in it.' Ezekiel 3:7: 'The house of Israel will not hearken unto thee; for they will not hearken unto me: for all the house of Israel are impudent and hardhearted.'

The tragedy: those claiming Abraham as father had become like Pharaoh, whose heart God hardened after repeated rejection of truth (Exodus 4-14). Paul would later explain that Israel's hardening was partial and temporary (Romans 11:25), serving God's purposes to bring salvation to Gentiles. Yet for individuals who persistently reject Christ's word, the outcome is catastrophic—they prove themselves NOT Abraham's spiritual children despite biological descent.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How does refusal to receive God's word lead progressively to hardening and hostility toward Christ?
2. What is the relationship between intellectual understanding of Jesus's claims and volitional acceptance of His word?
3. In what ways might we give lip service to Scripture while refusing to let God's word have 'place' in our hearts and lives?

Interlinear Text

οἶδα ὅτι σπέρμα Ἀβραάμ ἐστε· ἀλλὰ ζητεῖτε με

I know because seed Abraham's ye are but ye seek me

G1492 G3754 G4690 G11 G2075 G235 G2212 G3165

ἀποκτεῖναι ὅτι ὁ λόγος ὁ ἐμὸς οὐ χωρεῖ ἐν

to kill because word my no hath in

G615 G3754 G3588 G3056 G1699 G3756 G5562 G1722

ὑμῖν

you

G5213

Additional Cross-References

1 Corinthians 2:14 (Parallel theme): But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

Romans 9:7 (References Abraham): Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called.

John 7:1 (Parallel theme): After these things Jesus walked in Galilee: for he would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill him.

John 8:59 (Parallel theme): Then took they up stones to cast at him: but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.

Acts 13:26 (Word): Men and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the word of this salvation sent.

John 8:43 (Word): Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word.

John 7:19 (Word): Did not Moses give you the law, and yet none of you keepeth the law? Why go ye about to kill me?

John 11:53 (Parallel theme): Then from that day forth they took counsel together for to put him to death.

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