

John 8:38

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

I speak that which I have seen with my Father: and ye do that which ye have seen with your father.

Analysis

I speak that which I have seen with my Father—The perfect tense ἐώρακα (heōraka, 'I have seen') indicates completed action with ongoing results: Jesus has seen and continues to bear witness to what He's seen. This isn't secondhand report or learned tradition but eyewitness testimony from eternity. The preposition παρὰ (para, 'with/beside') indicates intimate presence—Jesus speaks from face-to-face fellowship with the Father, not distant observation. His teaching originates in the Godhead, not human reasoning or rabbinical tradition. This claim asserts preexistence and deity—only one who eternally dwells with the Father could speak what he's 'seen' there.

And ye do that which ye have seen with your father—The parallel construction ('I...with my Father' / 'ye...with your father') sets up devastating contrast. Jesus carefully avoids identifying their father yet—that bombshell comes in verse 44. The verb 'do' (ποιεῖτε/poieite) contrasts with 'speak' (λαλῶ/lalō)—Jesus speaks truth; they practice deeds. The present tense indicates habitual action: they're consistently doing what they've learned from their true father.

This verse introduces the concept of spiritual paternity beyond biology. Jesus has already denied that Abrahamic descent guarantees sonship (vv.33-37). Now He implies they have a different father whose character they're imitating. Children resemble parents—not just physically but morally, spiritually. Jesus reflects His Father's character (truth, light, life); His opponents reflect their father's nature

(which v.44 will identify as lies, darkness, murder). Spiritual genealogy trumps biological ancestry.

Historical Context

This exchange occurred during the Feast of Tabernacles (7:2), likely in the Court of Women near the treasury (8:20). The setting is significant: the temple represented God's dwelling place, the physical location where heaven and earth met. Yet Jesus claims something more intimate than temple worship—He has seen the Father, speaks from immediate divine presence, and reveals what the religious establishment, despite their temple proximity, could not know.

Jewish theology carefully guarded divine transcendence. Exodus 33:20 declared 'no man shall see me and live.' Isaiah 6:5, glimpsing God's glory, cried 'Woe is me! for I am undone.' Moses received God's word but saw only His back (Exodus 33:23). The prophets heard God's voice, received visions, but never claimed to have 'seen' God face-to-face in His heavenly dwelling. Yet Jesus casually asserts what Jewish theology deemed impossible: He has seen the Father and speaks from that vision.

The claim 'I have seen with my Father' echoes Johannine prologue: 'No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him' (John 1:18). Jesus is the unique revealer because of unique relationship—eternal coexistence 'in the bosom of the Father.' What follows in verses 39-59 will make this explicit, building to the climactic 'Before Abraham was, I AM' (v.58).

The accusation that they're imitating 'your father' challenged their deepest identity. Paternity determined inheritance, tribal affiliation, covenant status. Questioning their true father implied they were illegitimate children—not truly Abraham's heirs despite biological descent. This wasn't mere insult but theological confrontation: who you imitate reveals your true father, regardless of genealogy.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How does Jesus's claim to speak what He's 'seen with the Father' establish His unique authority compared to prophets, apostles, or religious teachers?
2. What does it mean that our habitual actions reveal our true spiritual paternity, regardless of religious heritage or profession?
3. How can we discern whether we're imitating our heavenly Father or reflecting the character of 'the father of lies' (v.44)?

Interlinear Text

ἐγὼ ὁ ἐωράκατε παρὰ τῷ πατρὶ μου, λαλῶ· καὶ
I that which I have seen with Father my speak and
G1473 G3739 G3708 G3844 G3588 G3962 G3450 G2980 G2532

ὑμεῖς οὖν ὁ ἐωράκατε παρὰ τῷ πατρὶ τὸν
ye that that which I have seen with Father your
G5210 G3767 G3739 G3708 G3844 G3588 G3962 G5216

ποιεῖτε

do

G4160

Additional Cross-References

John 5:19 (Parallel theme): Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.

John 8:44 (Parallel theme): Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the

truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.

John 5:30 (Parallel theme): I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me.

John 8:41 (Parallel theme): Ye do the deeds of your father. Then said they to him, We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God.

John 8:26 (Parallel theme): I have many things to say and to judge of you: but he that sent me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of him.

John 14:24 (Parallel theme): He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me.

John 14:10 (Parallel theme): Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.

John 3:32 (Parallel theme): And what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth; and no man receiveth his testimony.