

John 8:40

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham.

Analysis

But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God—Jesus starkly contrasts their murderous intent with His truthful revelation. The present tense ζητεῖτε (zēteite, 'you seek') indicates ongoing, active plotting. The verb 'kill' (ἀποκτεῖναι/apokteinai) is brutally direct—not 'oppose' or 'reject' but murder. Their hostility aims at His death.

The self-description 'a man' (ἄνθρωπον/anthrōpon) is fascinating. Jesus doesn't deny full humanity, though He's claimed deity throughout this chapter. He is genuinely human—the Incarnation united divine and human natures in one person. Yet this humanity makes their murderous intent more heinous: they're killing one who has done nothing but speak truth.

The relative clause 'that hath told you the truth' (ὃς τὴν ἀλήθειαν ὑμῖν λελάληκα/hos tēn alētheian hymin lelalēka) emphasizes Jesus's faithful witness. The perfect tense λελάληκα (lelalēka) indicates completed action with ongoing effects: 'I have spoken and my words remain.' The truth He's spoken isn't His own invention—it's 'which I have heard of God' (ἣν ἤκουσα παρὰ τοῦ Θεοῦ/hēn ēkousa para tou Theou). The aorist ἤκουσα (ēkousa) points to definite hearing in eternity past. Jesus is faithful messenger of divine revelation, deserving acceptance, not assassination.

This did not Abraham—The devastating final clause exposes their claim to be Abraham's children (v.39) as false. Abraham welcomed divine messengers (Genesis

18:1-8), even pleading for Sodom's salvation (Genesis 18:22-33). Abraham believed God's word, though it promised the impossible (Genesis 15:6). Abraham obeyed, even when commanded to sacrifice his son (Genesis 22:1-19). Never did Abraham seek to kill God's messenger. Their murderous intent proves they're NOT Abraham's children—they're acting opposite to their claimed father. This prepares for the coming revelation: their true father is the murderer from the beginning (v.44).

Historical Context

The accusation 'you seek to kill me' wasn't paranoia or exaggeration. John 7:1 explicitly states 'the Jews sought to kill him,' forcing Jesus to avoid Judea. John 7:19-20 records Jesus asking, 'Why go ye about to kill me?'—though the crowd denies it, the authorities' intent was clear. John 7:32 shows 'the Pharisees and the chief priests sent officers to take him.' By John 8:59, they'll attempt stoning. Within months, they'll succeed in crucifying Him (John 19).

The contrast with Abraham is theologically loaded. Genesis 18 records Abraham receiving three visitors (likely the pre-incarnate Christ and two angels). Abraham showed lavish hospitality: running to meet them, bowing, offering water, rest, bread—then preparing a feast with choice calf, curds, and milk. When the visitors announced Sarah would bear a son, Abraham believed despite seeming impossibility. When God revealed plans to destroy Sodom, Abraham interceded for the righteous. Abraham's consistent response to divine revelation was faith, worship, and obedience.

Jesus's opponents, by contrast, responded to divine revelation (Jesus is God's incarnate word, v.38) with hostility, rejection, and murderous plots. This proved genealogy meant nothing. Paul would later argue that Abraham's true children are 'the children of the promise' (Romans 9:8), those who believe God's word like Abraham did. The Jerusalem Pharisees' rejection of Christ demonstrated they were 'children of the flesh,' not 'children of the promise.'

The phrase 'a man that hath told you the truth' carries irony. In John's Gospel, Jesus repeatedly claims deity—equal with the Father (5:18), the bread of life

(6:35), the light of the world (8:12). Yet He's also genuinely human, the Word made flesh (1:14). This dual reality—fully God, fully man—enabled Him to be the perfect mediator (1 Timothy 2:5). They sought to kill God incarnate for telling them truth about God—the ultimate irony and tragedy.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How does hostility toward biblical truth reveal our true spiritual paternity more than religious profession?
2. What is the connection between rejecting God's word and rejecting God's messengers?
3. How did Abraham's response to divine revelation (faith, worship, obedience) contrast with the Pharisees' response to Christ?

Interlinear Text

νῦν	δὲ	ζητεῖτέ	με	ἀποκτεῖναι	ἄνθρωπον	ἦν	τὴν
now	But	ye seek	me	to kill	a man	that	G3588
G3568	G1161	G2212	G3165	G615	G444	G3739	
ἀλήθειαν	ὕμῃν	λελάληκα	ἦν	ἤκουσα	παρὰ	τοῦ	θεοῦ·
the truth	you	hath told	that	I have heard	of	G3588	God
G225	G5213	G2980	G3739	G191	G3844		G2316
τοῦτο	Ἀβραάμ	οὐκ	ἐποίησεν				
this	Abraham	not	did				
G5124	G11	G3756	G4160				

Additional Cross-References

John 8:26 (Truth): 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.

Galatians 4:29 (Parallel theme): But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now.

Galatians 4:16 (Truth): Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?

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