

John 8:42

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me.

Analysis

If God were your Father, ye would love me—The conditional *εἰ* (ei) with imperfect tense *ἠγαπᾶτε* (ēgapate) creates contrary-to-fact statement: 'If God were your Father (but He's not), you would love me (but you don't).' This is devastating logic: true children resemble their Father; God loves the Son; therefore, God's children must love the Son. Their hatred of Jesus proves God isn't their Father, despite their claim (v.41). The verb 'love' (*ἀγαπάω*/agapaō) isn't mere emotion but covenant loyalty, delighted allegiance, wholehearted embrace—precisely what they refuse Jesus.

For I proceeded forth and came from God—The causal *γὰρ* (gar, 'for') explains WHY they would love Him if God were their Father: because of His divine origin. Two verbs describe His mission: *ἐξῆλθον* (exēlthon, 'I proceeded forth/came out') and *ἦκω* (hēkō, 'I have come'). The aorist *ἐξῆλθον* points to definite historical act—the Incarnation, when eternal Word became flesh (John 1:14). The perfect *ἦκω* indicates completed action with ongoing state: 'I have come and am here.' This is the doctrine of the eternal procession of the Son from the Father, which takes historical form in the Incarnation and mission.

Neither came I of myself, but he sent me—Jesus emphasizes His mission's divine initiative. The negative *οὐδὲ* *ἀπ'* *ἐμαυτοῦ* *ἐλήλυθα* (oude ap' emautou elēlytha) denies self-commission: 'I did not come from myself.' The adversative *ἀλλὰ* (alla, 'but') contrasts with divine sending: *ἐκεῖνός με ἀπέστειλεν* (ekeinos me

apesteilen, 'that one sent me'). The demonstrative pronoun ἐκεῖνος (ekeinos, 'that one') emphatically points to God as sender. The aorist ἀπέστειλεν (apesteilen) indicates definite commissioning.

This verse establishes the necessary connection between the Father and the Son: you cannot have one without the other. To reject Jesus is to reject the Father who sent Him. To love God requires loving the Son whom God sent. 1 John 2:23 echoes this: 'Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father.' Their claim to have God as Father (v.41) is proven false by their rejection of the Son. True knowledge of God necessarily includes loving embrace of Jesus Christ.

Historical Context

Jesus's claim to have 'proceeded forth and came from God' asserts the doctrine of divine mission that permeates John's Gospel. Jesus is ἀπόστολος (apostolos, 'sent one') par excellence—the Father's authorized representative. In ancient Near Eastern culture, a sent envoy carried the sender's full authority; rejecting the envoy meant rejecting the sender. This legal concept (Hebrew שְׁלִיחֵ/shaliach) meant 'a man's agent is like himself.' To receive Jesus is to receive the Father; to reject Jesus is to reject the Father (John 13:20).

The distinction between 'proceeded forth' (ἐξῆλθον/exēlthon) and 'he sent me' (ἀπέστειλεν/apesteilen) suggests two aspects of Jesus's coming: eternal procession from the Father (Johannine Christology emphasizes the Son's eternal relation to the Father, 1:1-2) and historical mission through Incarnation. Church theology would later distinguish the eternal generation of the Son (begotten, not made) from His temporal mission (sent into the world). Both are in view here: Jesus eternally proceeds from the Father and was historically sent by the Father.

First-century Judaism expected Messiah as God's sent one, anointed to accomplish divine purposes. But they expected political deliverer, military victor, triumphant king. Jesus presented Himself as sent to reveal the Father, speak divine truth, and die for sinners. This was not the messianic script they anticipated. Their rejection stemmed partly from eschatological confusion (wrong expectations about Messiah's work) and partly from hard-hearted rebellion against revealed truth.

The claim 'if God were your Father, you would love me' demolishes all religious profession divorced from Christ. Every religion claiming to know God while rejecting Jesus is exposed as false. Islam reveres God but denies Jesus as divine Son—therefore, their 'God' is not the true Father. Judaism in rejecting Jesus forfeits claim to knowing the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—for that God sent Jesus. Modern liberal Christianity that reduces Jesus to moral teacher while denying His deity and unique saving work proves it doesn't love the true Christ and therefore doesn't know the true Father. There is no knowledge of God apart from Jesus Christ (John 14:6, 1 John 5:12).

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How does this verse expose the impossibility of claiming to love God while rejecting or ignoring Jesus Christ?
2. What is the relationship between Jesus's eternal 'procession' from the Father and His historical 'sending' in the Incarnation?
3. How can we test whether our love for God is genuine or merely religious profession, according to this verse?

Interlinear Text

εἶπεν	οὖν	αὐτοῖς	ό	Ἰησοῦς	Εἰ	ό	θεοῦ	πατὴρ
said	G3767	unto them	G3588	Jesus	If	G3588	God	Father
G2036		G846		G2424	G1487		G2316	G3962
ὑμῶν	ἥν	ἥγαπᾶτε	ἄν	έμέ	ἐγὼ	γὰρ	ἐκ	τοῦ
your	were	love	ye would	me	I	for	from	G3588
G5216	G2258	G25	G302	G1691	G1473	G1063	G1537	G2316
ἐξῆλθον	καὶ	ἥκω·	ούδὲ	γὰρ	ἀπ'	ἐμαυτοῦ	ἐλήλυθα	
proceeded forth	and	came	neither	for	of	myself	came I	
G1831	G2532	G2240	G3761	G1063	G575	G1683		G2064
ἀλλ' ἐκεῖνός	με	ἀπέστειλεν						
but	he	me	sent					
G235	G1565	G3165	G649					

Additional Cross-References

John 12:49 (Parallel theme): For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak.

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 17:8 (Parallel theme): For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me.

John 17:25 (Parallel theme): O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me.

Malachi 1:6 (Parallel theme): A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the LORD of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name. And ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name?

John 1:14 (Parallel theme): And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

1 John 4:14 (Parallel theme): And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.

John 5:43 (Parallel theme): I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive.

1 Corinthians 16:22 (Love): If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha.

John 3:17 (References God): For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

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