

Luke 3:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.

Analysis

John challenges those claiming Abrahamic descent: 'Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father.' True repentance produces fruit—observable life change, not mere religious profession. John demolishes confidence in ethnic privilege ('we have Abraham to our father') by declaring 'God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.' Physical descent doesn't guarantee spiritual standing. God can create Abraham's children from stones if necessary—grace and faith, not genealogy, determine covenant membership.

Historical Context

First-century Judaism emphasized corporate election—being born Jewish meant belonging to God's covenant people. Pharisees particularly stressed ancestral connection to Abraham as guaranteeing righteousness. John's preaching attacked this presumption, demanding individual repentance and fruit-bearing regardless of ancestry. This prepared for Paul's later theology that true Abraham's children are those who share his faith (Romans 4:16-17, Galatians 3:7-9), not merely his genes. John's raising children from stones may allude to God creating Adam from dust—God creates new life ex nihilo.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does John's demand for fruits worthy of repentance challenge the tendency to rely on religious heritage rather than genuine transformation?
2. What does God's ability to raise up Abraham's children from stones teach about the nature of covenant membership and spiritual identity?

Interlinear Text

ποιήσατε	οὖν	καρποὺς	ἀξίους	τῆς	μετανοίας	καὶ	μὴ
Bring forth	therefore	fruits	worthy	G3588	of repentance	and	not
G4160	G3767	G2590	G514		G3341	G2532	G3361
ἄρξησθε	λέγω	ἐν	ἐαυτοῖς	Πατέρα	ἔχομεν	τὸν	
begin	I say	within	yourselves	to our father	We have	G3588	
G756	G3004	G1722	G1438	G3962	G2192		
Ἄβραάμ	λέγω	γὰρ	ὑμῖν	ὅτι	δύναται	ὁ	θεὸς
Abraham	I say	for	unto you	That	is able	G3588	God
G11	G3004	G1063	G5213	G3754	G1410		G1537
τῶν	λίθων	τούτων	ἐγεῖραι	τέκνα	τῷ	Ἄβραάμ	
G3588	stones	these	to raise up	children	G3588	Abraham	
	G3037	G5130	G1453	G5043		G11	

Additional Cross-References

Acts 26:20 (Repentance): But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance.

Matthew 21:43 (References God): Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.

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.

Romans 4:16 (References Abraham): Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all,

Luke 19:40 (Parallel theme): And he answered and said unto them, I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out.

Philippians 1:11 (Resurrection): Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.

John 8:33 (References Abraham): They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?