

Gospel of John Study

Session 13

In our last session Jesus showed incredible love and mercy upon a man who was lame by healing him of his affliction which had lasted 38 years. Jesus performed this miracle on the Sabbath which provoked the Jewish leaders to confront Jesus over His breaking of their traditions. The man who was healed was the one who reported Jesus to the Jewish leaders (and it may have been because Jesus knew that this man would report Him that He chose to heal this one man out of the hundreds of other ill people at Bethesda that day). In His defense, Jesus explained how the Father was working at all times. Jesus claimed a special relationship with God, that of being God's Son. Because His Father worked, it was only right that He worked also.

In this session we are going to pick up where we left off last week and examine Jesus' defense. Though He is still speaking of why it was right for Him to disregard the Jews' tradition of the not working on the Sabbath, He is doing this by making a bold statement about Himself and His equality with God. It turns out that Jesus is going to get to the very heart of who He is and what the Jews should understand about Him at this point in His ministry. To the end, He will give several key witnesses that clearly attest to His true identity and thus His authority.

[John 5:16-18]

Q: What was the Jews original issue with Jesus? (*v.16 - That He was working on the Sabbath and thus breaking their tradition concerning the Sabbath.*)

Q: After Jesus response in v.17, why did the Jews want to kill Jesus? (*v.18 - Jesus was presenting Himself equal to God.*)

So in this brief exchange we see a valuable insight into identity and authority. Jesus told them who He was. The Jews completely understood who Jesus was presenting Himself to be. There was no misunderstanding at all about Jesus' identity. The problem was authority. It would stand to reason that if a man did wonders and miracles freely and claimed to be the Son of God that this would by default, lead others to yield to this man's authority as God's Son. Yet the Jews, despite realizing what Jesus was saying and witnessed His repeated signs, did not grant Him any authority. Instead they will continue to refute His claims of being God's Son and resist yielding to Him. They saw Jesus as a huge threat because He was challenging the fundamental distinctions they held between the holy, infinite God and finite, fallen human beings. Think of it, there was no Trinitarian belief in the Old Testament which was the entire Scripture for the Jews. The idea that God was this man's (Jesus') personal Father was a foreign concept to them and they saw that He was making Himself equal to God which outraged them.

What we have to keep in mind here is that Jesus isn't some second god trying to intrude on the turf of another older god. He is the true God and He and the Father are one. To worship the Son is to worship the Father and to worship the Father is to worship the Son. This was Jesus statement in v.17 that since He is one with the Father and the Father is working on the Sabbath to redeem mankind, He has that exact same authority to do likewise.

[John 5:19-24]

In this section Jesus is telling us that by the authority He has as the Son of God, He is doing and will continue to do things that only God can do. But in addition to this, Jesus is also giving us, His followers two thousand years later, a guide to how we should approach working with our Heavenly Father.

Q: What is the criteria for Jesus doing anything? (*v. 19 - It must be something that He saw His Father doing*)

Q: According to Jesus, who takes the initiative when it comes to doing God's work? (*God does. The Son only does what He sees the Father already doing.*)

Q: Why does the Father show the Son what He is doing? (*v.20 - The Father loves the Son.*)

So if the Father out of love for His Son shows Him all that He does, and the Son in response and out of love for His Father obeys Him perfectly and does what the Father does, so that people observe the Son and wonder at what He does; then there are two truths to follow:

- 1) The Son, by His obedience to the Father is revealing the Father to mankind, doing the Father's will. One could say and the Son is the Word of God, that He is narrating the Father for us.
- 2) This amazing disclosure of the nature and character of God utterly depends not on God's love for us but solely upon the love of the Father for the Son. The supreme self-disclosure of God, revealed at the cross, was supremely the outflow of the reciprocal love of the Father and Son within the Godhead.

Q: So as God's children, how should we engage in God's works? (*We should start by looking to see where God is working first and seek to join Him there.*)

Q: How do we know where God is working? (*When we see something happen that only God can do, we know it is Him at work and that He is revealing His work to us so as to initiate us to join Him in His work.*)

It is incredibly important to understand that there are six things that only God can do and if you want to join God in His work, you need to come to know what these things are so that you can join Him when you see these things happening. These six things come from Henry Blackaby's "*Experiencing God: Knowing and Doing the Will of God*"

1. Only God can cause people to seek Him. [**Romans 3:10-11**]
2. Only God can draw people to Himself [**John 6: 44**] (God is the One who leads people to Christ)
3. Only God can reveal spiritual truth [**John 14:26**] Here's a visual that shows this point [**Mark 12:28-34**]
4. Only God can convict the world about sin.[**John 16:7-11**]
5. Only God can convict the world about righteousness.
6. Only God can convict the world about judgment.

So when you witness any of these things happening, you don't need an engraved

invitation from God to join Him in His work, that scene you are witnessing is your invitation to join God in His work. The revelation is the invitation.

In v.20 Jesus alludes to greater works the Father will show the Son to do so that mankind will marvel at God and see Him as the power behind the Jesus and verify Him as His Son.

Q: According the context of this verse, what are the greater works to which Jesus was referring?
(v.21 - *The Son was going to be able to raise the dead to life.*)

[Luke 7:11-16]

In the Old Testament, raising people from the dead was God's prerogative alone. Remember, Jesus is not speaking to believers in this passage but rather people who have made themselves out to be Jesus' opponents due to their unbelief. Jesus does not do tricks, like some illusionists, for the applause of the crowd. He is not performing on a stage for His living or the accolades of people and cheap thrills. Rather He is using the only means available to reach these people's hard hearts. He is doing these signs so that they will be in awe at the miracle and come to believe that Jesus is the Son of God. His teaching and His signs both show the love of God at work for all mankind, even those who don't believe in Him or agree with Him at the moment. (Go back to the healing miracle at the beginning of the chapter for proof of this.) Jesus is hoping His signs will be the first step in their coming to faith in Him and thus gain eternal life.

Q: What is the ultimate reason that the Father has placed all judgment into the hands of the Son?
(v. 23 - *so that all will honor the Son as they have honored the Father*)

At first this stands in contrast to John 3:17. Yet this is resolved when you sort through the Greek. God did not send Jesus into the world to condemn the world. However, the Father does entrust all judgment to the Son. This word has a range of meanings: from discriminating such as in judicial matters all the way to issues of condemnation. God's purpose was to bring salvation to mankind through His Son. Belief in Jesus was to be the factor of discrimination between those who get saved and those who will ultimately get condemned.

This is solid evidence that Jesus is God, from a Jewish standpoint.

[Isaiah 48:11]

Q: Who will God NOT give His glory or honor to? (*Anyone else*)

Q: Yet in John 5:23, who does God give His honor to? (*Jesus*)

Thus, based upon this, Jesus is God. Since the Father and Son are one, to dishonor the Father is to dishonor the Son. Jesus was looking squarely into the eyes of the religious leaders of the day and telling them that they cannot honor God without honoring Him. He's telling them that if they do not obey Him and His teachings based upon what they have seen and heard, they are in absolute rebellion against God Himself. This leads us to remember why we seek to honor Jesus and Jesus alone in our worship. In our culture we are very pluralistic. People want to

promote all religions as equal yet this isn't the case as we see here. Religion that does not honor Jesus, as He is portrayed in Scripture, does not honor God and is a lie from Satan. Needless to say this will lead the Jews to further desire His death, which was also part of the plan of God.

Q: What is needed for one to pass out of death into life, according to Jesus? (*v.24 - One must hear Jesus' words and then believe God who sent Him.*)

Hearing, here and elsewhere, isn't just being aware of a sound in your ears. It is actually listening to the content of a message and then believing and obeying the message.

Notice again that Jesus doesn't say, "believe Me" and that is because these people most decidedly don't believe Him, at least at this time. He is appealing for them to believe God, the Father, because the Father is the One who is doing these great signs through His Son.

There is a major truth Jesus places before believers at this point. It is not essential to wait for your resurrection from the dead to enjoy the power of the resurrection in your life now. To a certain degree, believers can enjoy the resurrected life now.

[Colossians 1:9-13]

As believers, we don't attend the final judgment. Instead, we have left the court acquitted when we put our faith in Christ as our Savior and Lord. This chapter shows us some of the blessings and power believers can enjoy.

Q: What are the marks of the resurrected life that Christians can enjoy in this life now? (*We are filled with spiritual wisdom and understanding. We can walk in a manner pleasing to God. We can bear spiritual fruit and grow in knowledge of God. We are strengthened with all power. We can be steadfast in our faith and patient and joyful and give thanks as we contemplate the inheritance that is coming to us. Those who are lost cannot know any of these things but rather they belong to those who belong to Christ and are part of His resurrection.*)

In this next section, Jesus is going to go clarify and go into a bit more depth of the truths He mentioned in the former section and how they relate to our thinking of end times or known as eschatology.

[John 5:25-30]

The way Jesus uses the phrase "an hour is coming and now is" relates to our thinking of the "already but not yet" way of looking at the kingdom of God. The kingdom is already present in the sense of it existing invisibly in the hearts of Christ's followers. Jesus rules in the hearts of believers. Yet it is also not yet in the sense that it is not visible yet. Christ is not reigning visibly on the earth at this time for all to see - it will come at a later point in history. From the immediate context, the resurrection from the dead is already happening. When a person puts their faith in Jesus Christ, they spiritually rise from the dead to a new life in Christ.

Q: Which dead will be restored to life? (v.25 - *Those who hear the voice of the Son of God*)

V.26 explains how it is that the Son can exercise divine judgment and generate resurrection life by His powerful word. It is because, like God, He has life in Himself. God is self-existent and that means He always is - always is a living God. Humans, like all of living creation, derive our life from God. As He gives it, He can also take it back. However, to His Son and His Son alone has God imparted life in Himself. This life in the Son has been existent forever as part of the Father-Son relationship in the Godhead. It is due to this life that the Son has that grants Him the authority to raise the dead and judge the world. This statement would have caused His opponents' heads to explode.

Notice in v.27 the title "Son of Man" is used. Jesus is one of us. He shares our human nature and thus as the perfect representative of all mankind, He alone is adequate and worthy to judge humans. John brings three cords of thought together in this passage. First, Jesus is the Son of Man, the One from Daniel's prophecies who receives from the Ancient of Days the authority of God and a kingdom over which He has complete dominion. Secondly, Jesus belongs to humanity and has walked as humans walk. Thirdly, John often links judgment with revelation. Judgment descends because man loved darkness rather than the light. The rejection of the revelation is judgment. Since Jesus is the only God-man being and is one with the Father and since He is where life is found and can give it and take it away, He is the only being who can be trusted with the authority of judgment.

Q: Who is in the tombs in v.28? (*All the dead people*)

Q: What will those dead people hear? (v.28 - *the voice of Jesus*)

Q: What are the two groups of dead people raised by Jesus? (*those who did good deeds and those who did evil deeds*)

[I Thessalonians 4:13-18]

Q: Based on the context here in John, what does Jesus mean by "good deeds"? (*Good deeds are those that happen when person hears God and obeys what God says. This is new covenant living - not old covenant, legalistic thinking. Good deeds are the deeds which can only be done by those who have heard the Lord and believed Him, as portrayed in Scripture. They do the works of God, not their own works, because that is the will of God. So good deeds are whatever the Lord reveals to us that He is doing and we join Him in that endeavor. It is a Spirit-initiated and Spirit-empowered work enabled by our relationship with God.*)

Q: What can those who do good deeds expect at the resurrection of the dead? (*life*)

Q: What can those who do evil deeds expect at the resurrection of the dead? (*to face judgment*)

Q: What does Jesus do on His own? (v.30 - *nothing*)

Jesus was telling the Jews that since He did nothing on His own but only those things the

Father told Him to do and since He only sought to do the Father's will and not His own will, what He is doing is the will of God. This lets those who hear Jesus know that Jesus' judgments will be perfect in that they will be exactly what the Father would do. V.30 is a reiteration of vv. 19-20 with the emphasis on Jesus' unqualified passion and commitment to only seek to please the One who sent Him - His Father. Even on the last day, Jesus will follow the Father's will.

For the rest of the chapter, Jesus is going to detail the witnesses which point to Him being the Son of God and thus equal to God.

[John 5:31-32]

[Deuteronomy 19:15]

Q: According to the Law, how many witnesses were required in order to convict a person? (*At least two*)

So now we are confronted with a paradox. The Law states that it requires two witnesses to establish the truth of a matter, yet Jesus is only One witness. However, He is one with the Father as well and so He can show that the Father, who is giving Jesus the authority to do these signs, is the One testifying about Jesus being the Son of God. The Father is the second witness mentioned in v.32.

[John 8:12-19] - This is the plain statement that is semi-shrouded in 5:32.

Despite having two witnesses, Jesus yields to the demand of rabbinical tradition and proceeds to give witnesses outside of Himself. Keep in mind that all that follows is Jesus giving a record of reliable witnesses that correctly identify Him as the Son of God and the Messiah.

[John 5:33-35]

Q: Who is the John referred to in v.33? (*John the Baptist*)

Q: What was the role of John the Baptist? (*He predicted the coming of the Messiah and was to point Him out to the masses.*)

The Jews were happy about John's ministry because they were expecting a warrior-king Messiah to rise up. John's light was something enjoyed at first because of the Jews' false expectations of the Messiah. When Jesus proved to not be the King riding in on a white horse calling for the overthrow of Rome but instead turned over the money tables in the Temple and called out their hypocrisy, they turned on Him and so did their level of comfort.

John is described as a lamp because a lamp is only useful when it is burning or ignited. The lamp illuminates something else beyond itself. Like John, the lamp gives light for some greater purpose. However, like all lamps, they all eventually burn out. John's witness served its purpose and then ended. As witnesses of Jesus we need to remember that our purpose is to illuminate Jesus, someone beyond ourselves, and that we too have only a limited time to do this.

Yet, there is more to this lamp than this meaning.

[Psalm 132:17]

The horn of David is a reference to the Messiah, God's anointed One. The Messiah will have a lamp prepared for Him so we see that John the Baptist and Jesus are the fulfillment of this Old Testament prophecy about the Messiah. But wait, there is more...

[Psalm 132:9]

In this verse the same word translated "shout for joy" is used by Jesus in John 5:35 and is translated "rejoice". So they were willing to rejoice for a short time. Considering Jesus was speaking to the religious He was telling them that the true saints would see the Messiah and would rejoice while these who were confronting Him were being strongly indicted for their lack of faith. They were not true saints as they stopped rejoicing in the light.

[John 5:36-38]

There are two others that bear witness to Jesus being the Son of God. They are the works which the Father gave Jesus to do and the Father Himself. Jesus' works were self-apparent. Anyone who saw them knew immediately that a man could not do these things. They were acts of God. Nicodemus even was partly motivated by the works of Jesus as he came to Jesus knowing that the works He did were from God. The coming of the Messiah would be marked by many miracles and signs.

While we often think of the miracles of Jesus being motivated by His great love and mercy for people, that isn't the whole story. They are also motivated by His desire to point people to a right understanding of who He is and why He came.

[Acts 2:22]

The works of Jesus make His true identity clear. By themselves, without any further witnesses, the works alone should convince people of Jesus' deity.

Q: What does Jesus have to say about those who are opposing Him at this point? (*v.37 - They have not heard that Father's voice nor have they seen His form.*)

Remember that the Jewish leaders often appealed to Moses. They saw Moses as their spiritual father as he was the giver of the Law. They claimed to listen carefully to the words of Moses. Yet, Jesus has two lines of attack against them at this point. As mentioned in v.37, they never heard God's voice which makes the difference from Moses who did hear God's voice. Since Jesus speaks the words of God and the Jews do not hear the voice of Jesus in God, they are not true followers of Moses. In fact, Moses turns out to be their accuser because if they had believed Moses, they would believe Jesus as well. The Jews were also unlike Jacob who did see God's form and wrestled with Him. Since Jesus is the very manifestation of God, by missing Jesus they are missing God and denying that they are true Israelites (as Jacob is Israel). They also didn't have the word dwelling in their hearts like Joshua did. They missed the point that divine blessings stem from the indwelling word in a person's heart. Jesus is the very Word of God and

they have no time or place for Him and thus they miss out on the experience of God's blessings.

Q: Since these Jews did not have God's Word abiding in their hearts, what did they not believe? (v.38 - *The Son of God who was sent by the Father*)

Though that is a stinging rebuke, there is one more witness to the certainty of Jesus being the Son of God.

[John 5:39-47]

There are two main themes presented in the Old Testament. The first is the absolute hopeless, sinful condition of man. Since Adam and Eve sinned in the garden, all of the heroes of the faith are shown as flawed by sin and rebellious against God. Take Noah - no sooner had he exited the ark than he got drunk and naked. Abraham - the friend of God - didn't trust God enough to wait for a legitimate son. Moses led the Israelites from Egypt and gave the people the Law but was forbidden to enter the Promised Land due to disobedience. David - the man after God's own heart - committed adultery and covered it up with murder. However, this first theme is followed by the second theme and that is God will send a Savior. From the very moment man fell into sin, God promised One who would deliver mankind from sin and his helpless state. This Savior will be called the Promised Seed, Son of Man, Suffering Servant, Passover Lamb, the Lion of Judah and many others. The entire Old Testament is a witness to Jesus needing to come and what He'd be like when He did arrive.

The failure of the Jews to grasp God's truth was nowhere more evident than in their approach to the Scriptures. Jesus acknowledged the seriousness which the Jews studied the Scriptures. Yet, despite pouring over the Word of God they missed Him and thus, His Son. The Jews' motivation for their fervent study of the Word was the hope of final acceptance by God (v.39). In the end all the Jews had was a head knowledge which is completely insufficient for one to come to faith in Christ and thus know eternal life.

Jesus tells them plainly that there is nothing life-giving about studying the Scriptures, if one fails to comprehend the true content and purpose of the Scriptures. Paul discovered this truth.

[Romans 7:9-11]

Q: What does Jesus say that the Old Testament does? (v.39 - *It testifies about Him*)

This gives us the big key to interpreting correctly the Old Testament. When you begin with the truth that the Old Testament points to Jesus, the Messiah, the Son of God, the Son of Man, His death and resurrection, etc.. then and only then will you come to the right conclusions concerning what the Scriptures are actually saying. What Jesus is saying here is that since these Jews are refusing to come to Him for life, their refusal constitutes evidence that they are the ones not reading the Scriptures as they were meant to be read.

Q: In v. 41 what does Jesus not accept from man? (*human glory - praise from them*)

Q: Under what circumstances do you think that these Jews would give Jesus their praise/glory? *(If Jesus cowed to their expectations of what a Messiah was supposed to be in their eyes. Then they would praise Him.)*

Notice that Jesus will not stoop their demands or wishes. His only desire is to please His Father in heaven. Because of Jesus' single-mindedness about doing only the Father's will, this is what the Father defines as His love. The Jews in opposing Jesus do not seek to do the Father's will thus they do not possess the love of the Father. The end of v.43 means this: Jesus is saying that the chief judgment against those who deny that Jesus is the promised Messiah is not that they end up with no Messiah. The chief judgment against these people is that they will follow false Messiahs out the wazoo. (If someone comes in his own name, presenting himself as the Messiah, you'll believe that one.. but not Me who has done all these signs.) Historically there were a string of false Messiahs who arose before Jesus came on the scene. One was Rabbi Akiba who was viewed as the "star out of Jacob" prophesied by Balaam in Numbers 24:17, until he was routed and killed by the Romans. Jesus isn't so much wanting to make a list of all false Messiahs but rather contrast the false ones with Himself.

The reason why the Jews would receive the false Messiahs but not were unwilling to receive Jesus is explained in v.44. Like most people, then and now, these wanna-be Messiahs and those seeking to be their followers were dependent upon accepting praise from other men rather than the praise that comes from God. This led the Jewish leaders prone to false claims from those who would use flattery or pandering to specific causes close to the heart of the Jews.

Q: According to Jesus, who will be the accuser of the Jews? *(v.45 - Moses)*

This ties in with our discussion of vv. 37-8 on how the Jews were not actually listening to Moses because if they had been, they would now be listening to Jesus. Remember that Jesus' main purpose is to save, not condemn. However, it won't be Jesus who does the condemning on that day but rather Moses who they failed to hear. It's clear from Jesus' words here that the condemnation brought by Moses against the Jews will not be based on failing to obey any specific command or ritual but their failure to understand the foundation of the Law-covenant between them and God. They took the Law as an end unto itself instead of it being a means to pointing man to a real love relationship with God through His Messiah. They pinned their hopes on Moses rather than certain way of reading the writings of Moses and now they are being rebuked by the Son of God.

V. 47 points out that the words of Moses are closely aligned with the words of Jesus. It is assumed that they come from the same source of authority. So to reject one is to reject the other. The Jews failure to grasp what Moses writings were about is described by Jesus as "not believing" what he (Moses) wrote. So in essence, Jesus has just publicly torn them and their traditions to shreds for their unbelief in Him. By invoking Moses and then stating that it would be Moses who would condemn them, Jesus lit a fire that would not be extinguished until the cross. Yet even in this stinging rebuke, Jesus was showing them great love and patience by pointing out who He was and urging them to believe in Him rather than the man-made things they were putting their trust in.

Q: Do you have any questions, comments, rebukes or rebuttals?