

## "The Awesome Claims of Jesus Christ"

John 5:16-30

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Today is Mother's Day. I am so thankful for the great heritage of a godly mother who led me to Christ when I was a little boy. My mom grew up in a home that was nominally Christian---they went to church on Sundays, but the church they attended did not preach the gospel. She assumed that you get to heaven by trying to be a good person and doing the best you can. Later she left home for nurses training in Chicago. There a group of fellow nursing students invited her to a Bible study. In that Bible study she learned what it really means to have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. She trusted Him as her Savior. She met my dad there in Chicago. He too had recently trusted Jesus as his Savior. When I was born, my mom was concerned that all her children know the Lord. She had me memorizing Scripture from the time I was very young. She hosted Child Evangelism classes in our home. I still remember vividly that day, when I was around 4 years old, that I understood I was a sinner in the sight of God. I knew I needed Jesus as my Savior. As I sat on the edge of our kitchen table, my mom led me in a simple prayer and I asked Jesus into my life.

I am looking forward to seeing my mom again this coming summer. She is 85 years old now and has Alzheimer's disease. She no longer recognizes me. The last time I saw her, I said, "Mom, do you recognize me?" She responded, "You look familiar and I know I should but I don't." Then I asked her, "Mom, do you remember John 3:16?" She recited it perfectly! ***"For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life."*** She hadn't forgotten God's Word. And when I asked her what was most precious to her, she said, "God's truth and faithfulness." I am so thankful for a godly mother who taught me God's Word and led me to Christ. The greatest thing you can pass on to your child is a living faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

TRANSITION: This morning we come to one of the greatest passages in the Gospel of John and in the entire NT—because in this passage, we come face to face with the awesome claims of the Lord Jesus Christ. These are claims no one can afford to ignore. He claimed to be equal with God. He claimed that he has the same power to give life and the same authority to judge as God the Father does; and he claimed that he is worthy of receiving the honor that is due to God alone.

C. S. Lewis said: *"Among Pantheists, like the Indians, anyone might say that he was a part of God, or one with God: there would be nothing very odd about it. But this man, since He was a Jew, could not mean that kind of God. God, in their language, meant the Being outside the world Who had made it and was infinitely different from anything else. And when you have grasped that, you will see that what this man said was, quite simply, the most shocking thing that has ever been uttered by human lips."* (Mere Christianity, 55)

These words of Jesus were spoken in response to the Jewish religious leaders who were persecuting him because he had healed the man at the pool of Bethesda on a Sabbath day. Jesus responded very simply to their accusations (17): *"My Father is working until now, and I myself am working."* What he meant by this is, "I am simply doing the work and the will of my Father. My Father is always at work healing and restoring lost sinners, and I am working too. By criticizing me you are really criticizing my Father." These words REALLY set them off! Verse 18 says *"For this reason the Jews tried all the harder to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God."*

William Barclay has written: *"The man who listened to words like this had only two alternatives—the listener must either accept Jesus as the Son of God, or he must hate Him as a blasphemer and seek to destroy Him. There is hardly any passage where Jesus appeals for men's love and defies men's hatred as He does here"* (William Barclay, The Daily Study Bible Series: The Gospel of John).

In the following verses Jesus made three claims of equality with God. Let us consider them together this morning. You will notice in these verses, that Jesus doesn't back down or apologize. He doesn't say, "Oh, you misunderstood what I actually meant. I never intended to claim equality with God." No! In these verses he actually affirms and reinforces the very claim they objected to—in three ways:

- He claimed equality with God in his actions
- He claimed equality with God in his power to give life and raise the dead
- He claimed equality with God in his authority to judge all mankind

First...

#### **I. HE CLAIMED EQUALITY WITH GOD IN HIS ACTIONS (19-20)**

***"Jesus gave them this answer: 'I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does. Yes, to your amazement he will show him even greater things than these.'"***

What is Jesus saying? He is saying, "I cannot act independent of or inconsistent with God the Father. Whatever He does I do. Since I am God it is really impossible for me to do anything other than what the Father does."

St. Augustine back in the 4<sup>th</sup> century noted these words, *"whatever the Father does the son also does."* He comments: *"our Lord does not say, whatever the Father does the Son does other things like them, but he says whatever the Father does the Son does the very same things...If the Son does the same things, and in the same way, then let the Jew be silenced, let the Christian believe, and the heretic be convinced; the Son is equal with the Father"* (J. C. Ryle, p. 284, John Vol. I).

If Jesus can do all that the Father does, that means He has the very same nature and attributes as God. It means He is equal to God the Father and is Himself God. This is the awesome claim that Jesus is making and it is a claim that demands a response.

Again, C. S. Lewis writes in Mere Christianity:

*"Christ says that He is "humble and meek" and we believe Him; not noticing that, if He were merely a man, humility and meekness are the very last characteristics we could attribute to some of His sayings. I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: 'I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept His claim to be God.' That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to" (Mere Christianity, 56).*

Jesus goes on in verse 21 to make a second claim to equality with God...

## **II. HE CLAIMED EQUALITY WITH GOD IN HIS POWER TO GIVE LIFE (21, 24-26)**

***"For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it."***

This was an appeal to the OT. The OT taught that only God could give life or raise the dead. Deuteronomy 32:39: *"See now that I myself am He! There is no god besides me. I put to death and I bring to life..."* I Samuel 2:6: *"The LORD brings death and makes alive; he brings down to the grave and raises up."* In II Kings 5:7, when Naaman the Syrian came to him to the King of Israel to be healed, the King tore his robes and said, *"Am I God? Can I kill and bring back to life?..."*

So Jesus is saying here, "Everything that God does, I can do. God can raise the dead and make them live, and that's what I can do. I am equal with God in His power to raise the dead." What an awesome claim! When we come to chapter 11 Jesus proves this when He says to Lazarus who had been dead for four days, *"Lazarus, come forth."*

The same thing is true about judgement...

## **III. HE CLAIMED EQUALITY WITH GOD IN HIS AUTHORITY TO JUDGE (22-30)**

***"Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgement to the son. That all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him."***

Every Jew knew that one day God would unleash his final judgement. Deuteronomy 1:17 declares: *"...judgement belongs to God."* Judgement is God's prerogative. Jesus says, I am equal with God in the authority to judge. The Father has entrusted all judgement to me. Then in verse 23 he says, the reason all judgement has been entrusted to the Son is *"that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him."* You cannot say that you worship God and honor him if you dishonor His Son. *"He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him."* If we reject the Son we are rejecting the Father. If we spurn Jesus Christ, we are spurning the Father!

ILLUSTRATION: Bill Pearce told an interesting story on "Night Sounds" the other evening. It was the story of son of a wealthy man, who went away to war. During a particular battle his best friend was wounded. As he was carrying him off the field of battle, he was shot through the heart and died instantly. His friend was an artist and had painted a picture of him some time before his death. When the friend returned to the United States, he gave the picture he had drawn the father of his friend who had died saving his life. The father said, "Let me pay you for this!" But he responded, "No, this is a gift to you in honor of your son." The father was a wealthy art collector. He had many famous paintings in his collection. But he treasured this painting of his son above all those famous paintings, and always kept it in a prominent place. Eventually this man died and his great art collection was brought up for sale at an auction. There were great Rembrants and Picassos and other famous works of art, and people came from all over to bid on these masterpieces.

As they gathered together in a large room of the house for the auction, the auctioneer announced, "Now we will begin the auction." He began by putting up for sale this simple painting of the son who had died on the battlefield. Someone in the back of the room began to grumble, "What is this! We didn't come here for this. We are not interested in this painting. We want to see the great art treasures!" But the auctioneer persisted. Then someone else near the front started to complain, "We don't want this picture! Bring out the Rembrants!" The auctioneer held his ground. Several others then expressed their irritation: "Get rid of that picture. It's worthless. Bring out the Picassos!" But the auctioneer insisted that this picture would be offered for sale along with all the others. So he said, "What am I bid for this picture of the Son?" No one said a word. Finally, a man in the back spoke up. He was the gardener. "I have \$10 here that I can give for the painting." The auctioneer said, "Ten dollars going once...ten dollars going twice...SOLD for ten dollars!"

Then to everyone's surprise, the auctioneer announced, "That closes the bidding!" Everyone cried, "What do you mean! Show us the great paintings!" Then the auctioneer explained, I couldn't reveal this earlier, but the owner of this estate clearly stipulated in his will that the person who purchased the picture of his son would receive his whole estate! The bidding is closed. This estate and all these works of art go to the man who owns the picture of the Son!

APPLICATION: The Bible teaches that all the treasures of heaven, forgiveness of sin and eternal life go to the one who has the Son! This is the astounding claim that Jesus Christ himself makes in verse 24: ***"I tell you the truth (literally verily, verily, or truly, truly), whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life."***

Notice three things that Jesus promises to those who respond to his words and put their trust in Him: (1) You have eternal life. Eternal life is found only in Christ. John 14:6: "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father but my me." I John 5:11-13: "this is the testimony, that God has given us eternal life and this life is in his son. He who has the son has life. He who does not have the son does not have life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may KNOW that you have eternal life." (2) You will not be condemned. The condemnation for your sin was paid for by Christ when he died on the cross. Romans 8:1: "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus." II Corinthians 5:17: "Therefore if any man be in Christ he is a new creation: old things have passed away, behold all things have become new." (3) You have passed out of death into life.

That's the way it is. Verse 26: *"For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself."* Those are God's terms. Apart from Jesus Christ there is no life. But at the same time the opportunity is open to everyone. The Bible says, *"Whosoever will may come and drink of the water of life freely."* But there is no other option: John 3:36 says: *"Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him."* If you have the Son you have it all. If you reject the Son you lose everything.

Notice Jesus' final words in this section in verses 28-29:

***"Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when ALL who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out—those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned."***

Death has infected the whole human race. There is no one on earth you can turn to, to avoid it. Death is inevitable. Sooner or later it will affect us all. But Jesus made the astounding claim that he has authority even over death! He can and he will raise the dead. A day is coming when all the dead will hear his voice and come forth. It will not be the Father's voice they hear, or the voice of the Holy Spirit. They will hear the voice of the Son of Man, Jesus Christ!

There will be two resurrections: a resurrection of life—some will rise to live. There will be a resurrection of judgement—some will rise to be condemned. There is a final judgement and the judge will be Jesus Christ himself. Those who have done good are those who have trusted him as their Savior. Those who have not trusted him will stand before God on the basis of their own worthless works and be condemned because they rejected the only one whose work on the cross could save them. At the Great White Throne Judgement in Revelation 20:11-15 Jesus Christ will be the presiding Judge. Whether they like it or not, every man and woman will someday stand before him face to face. ***"The Father judges no one but has entrusted all judgement to the Son."***

That day of judgement will be a terrifying experience for those who have rejected Christ. Revelation 6:15-17 says that people will be crying for the rocks and the mountains to fall on them and hide them from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb (that is Jesus). What a solemn thing to realize that Jesus Christ is not only the Savior, but He is the final Judge. For those of us who believe in Him, He is the One who will raise us, and transform us, and make us just like Himself. We will pass from death to life—into a glory that we can not even imagine now.

One of my mother's favorite hymns expresses the hope we have of meeting Jesus face to face someday. It is entitled, "Face to Face."

*Face to face with Christ my Savior,  
Face to face what will it be?  
When with rapture I behold Him,  
Jesus Christ who died for me.*

*Chorus:*

*Face to face I shall behold Him,  
Far beyond the starry sky;  
Face to face, in all His glory,  
I shall see Him by and by!*

*Only faintly now I see Him,  
With the darkling veil between;  
But a blessed day is coming,  
When His glory shall be seen.*

*What rejoicing in His presence,  
When are banished grief and pain,  
When the crooked ways are straightened  
And the dark things shall be plain.*

*Face to face—O blissful moment!  
Face to face—to see and know;  
Face to face with my Redeemer,  
Jesus Christ who loves me so!*

What a great and glorious day is coming for those who have trusted Jesus as their Savior! At the end of C. S. Lewis' book, The Last Battle, on the last page of the last book in The Chronicles of Narnia, Aslan speaks to Peter, Edmund and Lucy....*"There was a real railway accident," said Aslan softly. "Your father and mother and all of you are—as you used to call it in the Shadowlands—dead. The term is over: the holidays have begun. The dream is ended: this is the morning."*

*And as He spoke He no longer looked to them like a lion; but the things that began to happen after that were so great and beautiful that I cannot write them. And for us this is the end of all the stories, and we can most truly say that they all lived happily ever after. But for them it was only the beginning of the real story. All their life in this world and all their adventures in Narnia had only been the cover and the title page: now at last they were beginning Chapter One of the Great Story which no one on earth has read: which goes on forever: in which every chapter is better than the one before."*

(C. S. Lewis, The Last Battle, 228)

I hope you know him today! If not, trust him now as your Savior. Those who have the Son have it all! Those who reject the Son lose everything! His claims are true, and someday you will see him face to face in glory or in terrible shame. Claim his promise today and put your trust in him as your personal Savior. Amen!

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