

WHAT ARE WE TO MAKE OF JESUS?

John 5:18-47

What you believe, determines how you behave, and ultimately who you become.

DOCTRINE

18 This was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.

In John 5:1-18 we see Jesus heal a man who had been paralyzed for 38 years. Instead of celebrating the miracle of grace — the Jewish authorities charge Jesus with a misdemeanor of doing work on the Sabbath. But then instead of taking his slap on the wrist — Jesus tells the authorities that He's innocent of breaking the Sabbath because God is his Father and he's simply doing the Father's work.

This escalates the misdemeanor to a felony — a minor offense punishable by shameful glances becomes a major offense punishable by death. Make no mistake — Jesus is making a staggering claim to be equal with God. Jesus is saying that He is God.

19 So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise. 20 For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing. And greater works than these will he show him, so that you may marvel. 21 For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will. 22 For the Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son, 23 that all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him.

These are bold and staggering claims. Each one deserves your time and consideration. This is one of the longest passages where Jesus describes his relationship to his Father and one of the clearest articulations of his full divinity.

Here we get Doctrine of God straight from Jesus. It's presented to us not as ideals to consider — but as a foundational reality of belief. It is bedrock for building a life of meaning, purpose, and joy.

1. Jesus does the work of God (v19)

The Father and the Son and totally united in their mission. God the Father works through God the Son simultaneously and in unison.

2. The Father loves the Son and makes know to Him His Plans (v 20)

God is a God of love and that divine love is shared between the Father and the Son. The Father reveals his plans to the Son and their work together should stir worship in us.

3. Jesus has the power to give life (v21)

God is the God of life and has power over death — Jesus also gives life and has power over death.

4. Jesus renders divine judgment (v22)

God the Father has given God the Son the responsibility of rendering Judgment.

5. Jesus is deserving of our full honor (v23)

Jesus is worthy of our honor and worship and those who reject Jesus likewise reject God the Father.

When you consider all of these claims — the conclusion is this — Jesus is the Son of God — equal to God the Father. Jesus is God. In the Old Testament it is God and God alone who gives life and preserves his people from death. It is God and God alone who renders judgment and it is God and God alone who is deserving of worship.

Jesus just took all those truths — all that doctrine — and applied it to Himself. This is why the early church after reading the gospels and the rest of the New Testament concluded that there is one God in three persons — The Blessed Trinity.

The New City Catechism states it like this —

There are three persons in the one true and living God: The Father, The Son, and The Holy Spirit. They are the same in substance, equal in power and glory.

This doctrine is not irrelevant or inconsequential — If it's false — it's to be rejected and scorned. If it's true — it is to be received and believed with great joy.

24 Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life. 25 “Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. 26 For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. 27 And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man. 28 Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice 29 and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.

Belief in Jesus leads to Life in Jesus.

Jesus says that if you receive and believe this doctrine — then you will have eternal life — and here's what that entails. When you stand before God at the end of your life to give an account for all that you've believed, loved, and done — you will be acquitted — declared 'not guilty' because of the righteousness and life of Christ. Not only that — you will pass from death to life to experience life after death. And get this...life after life after death is not in a disembodied state as a pseudo-angel in a diaper playing a mini-harp.

The Christian hope of life after death is in a glorified, renewed body that has been resurrected that will never again be destroyed. You don't have to grasp the entirety of these concepts in a moment — but it should stir in you a desire to want to dive deeper and consider the claims that Jesus is making.

And Jesus says — if we will hear the voice of the Son of God — we will come alive — not just later — but right now. The Christian life is not just about what happens to you after you die...The Christian life is about life right now. Apart from Christ you are dead. But if you will hear the voice of the Son of God and believe in Him you will live. You will come alive right now and forevermore.

DEFENSE

31 If I alone bear witness about myself, my testimony is not true. 32 There is another who bears witness about me, and I know that the testimony that he bears about me is true. 33 You sent to John, and he has borne witness to the truth. 34 Not that the testimony that I receive is from man, but I say these things so that you may be saved. 35 He was a burning and shining lamp, and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light.

Jewish law required at least two witnesses to validate a defendant's testimony. Though Jesus is fully God and needs no external witnesses, He gives a proper Jewish defense.

His first witness is John the Baptist. He reminds them that they sent a delegation to John to investigate into John's ministry, to look into Jesus, and to figure out if the Messiah had come.

We saw this earlier in John. And what was John's conclusion —

John 1:34

And I have seen and have borne witness that this [Jesus] is the Son of God.

Jesus says John was like a lamp — burning bright in the darkness of the wilderness — to give light so that all could see that Jesus is the Son of God.

Now Jesus calls his second witness to the stand — Will God the Father please take the stand...

36 But the testimony that I have is greater than that of John. For the works that the Father has given me to accomplish, the very works that I am doing, bear witness about me that the Father has sent me. 37a And the Father who sent me has himself borne witness about me.

Jesus says that The Father himself has borne witness about him. This is a reference back to his baptism where the God the Father audibly declared...

Matthew 3:17

"This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

So far — two stellar witnesses — the prophet that bridged the gap between the OT and the NT and God the Eternal Father.

Then he brings in his evidence. He points to the signs and miracles — the works he has accomplished as proof that He is the Son of God. Then Jesus says — Go read your Bibles — the Scriptures point to me. All the evidence points to the reality that Jesus is the Son of God.

Jesus says — Look at Exhibit A — Look at the man who was healed from 38 years of paralysis. The Bethany Pool didn't heal him — I healed him. No one but God has power of disease and paralysis. No one but God could do that. And if you paid attention to the Scriptures you would know that the prophets said that when Messiah comes — the lame will walk.

Isaiah 35:4-6

Say to those who have an anxious heart, "Be strong; fear not! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God. He will come and save you." Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy. For waters break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert;

This is just one example — the prophets gave examples of what they could expect when God showed up. One clear example is that the lame would be restored. At the very least — when Jesus healed the disabled man — it should have given them pause to consider if Jesus was the Christ.

Now — at this point — His defense goes on the offensive.

His voice you have never heard, his form you have never seen, 38 and you do not have his word abiding in you, for you do not believe the one whom he has sent. 39 You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, 40 yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.

Jesus says — part of the reason they fail to recognize him as The Son of God is that they have grown mute to the voice of God. They've lost spiritual eyes to see. And they don't have the word of God abiding in them any more.

His indictment is that they turned Scripture into an end instead of a means. They looked to Scripture to provide life — instead of searching the Scriptures to see what they point to.

And *they* did it with Scripture. But it doesn't have to be Scripture. We can take literally anything that's meant to point us to God and make it the point. That's the definition of idolatry — taking the gifts of God and making them the object of our worship. And when that happens we stop abiding in God and we no longer have access to his life. We become deaf to his word and blind to what he is doing.

This is the point of Psalm 115:4-8

4 Their idols are silver and gold, the work of human hands. 5 They have mouths, but do not speak; eyes, but do not see. 6 They have ears, but do not hear; noses, but do not smell. 7 They have hands, but do not feel; feet, but do not walk; and they do not make a sound in their throat. 8 Those who make them become like them; so do all who trust in them.

We can't help but become like what we worship. What we believe — determines how we behave — and ultimately impacts who we become. G. K. Beale said it like this —

What people revere, they resemble, either for ruin or for restoration.

What we believe to be of greatest value starts to determine and drive our behavior and ultimately, we are shaped and formed into the image of what we worship.

- ◆ If we value our appearance — we'll become vain and self-centered.
- ◆ If we worship money — we'll become greedy, oppressive, and materialistic.
- ◆ If we worship what people think of us — we'll become envious and fragile.
- ◆ If we overly value relationships — we'll become co-dependent and manipulative.
- ◆ If we worship intellect and academia — we'll become proud, condescending, and conceited.

We could keep going — We become what we worship. Because they looked to Scripture for life — instead of the God of Scripture — they had become deaf and blind to the things of God.

Who or what are you trusting in? Are you becoming the person you want to be? If not — maybe it's because you are worshipping a false god.

Jesus's defense is as strong and bold as his doctrine. You have to do something with it. You have to decide. Now let's look at Jesus's closing statement as we make our decision.

DECISION

41 I do not receive glory from people. 42 But I know that you do not have the love of God within you. 43 I have come in my Father's name, and you do not receive me. If another comes in his own name, you will receive him. 44 How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?

Jesus explains to them — I do not receive glory from people. What does that mean? What does it mean to receive glory? When we talk about receiving or giving glory — we're talking about giving and receiving worth. When you glorify something, you're ascribing value and worth to it.

Jesus says — my worth, my value, my identity is not connected to people — but to God.

Jesus gets to the heart of the problem which is the problem of the heart. Jesus says, you guys don't have the love of God within you. You're seeking and being filled from a different source. You don't seek the glory from God and instead, you seek glory from men.

See — the heart — like nature — abhors a vacuum. The heart has to give love and receive love. It both looks for glory and looks to give glory. It ascribes worth and validation and it desperately desires to find worth and validation. It must be filled and it must be emptied and this cycle is happening constantly.

You don't get a choice *if* you will worship — your only choice is what you will worship.

So Jesus says — without the love of God within you — you will look to be filled by something else. If your heart is absent of the love of God — you will seek to have it filled by something else.

What grounds your identity? What anchors your heart? These are the questions Jesus is asking us this morning. And they're crucial to the question — Will we believe and follow Jesus?

We often think we make our decisions based purely on reason and rationality. But you are not a brain on a stick. The decision making process is a complicated calculus that involves our whole being — head, heart, and hands. We use reason and logic, emotion and feeling, experience and desire to make our decisions.

Jesus sums up the crux of the matter — You will not believe in me when you're seeking to find your glory from one another and not from God. He's saying — they're more concerned with the opinions and approval from their peers than they are with the opinion and approval from God. They seek glory from man and not God.

45 Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father. There is one who accuses you: Moses, on whom you have set your hope. 46 For if you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me. 47 But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words?"

At the end of his trial — Jesus acquits himself and offers a final indictment of his own. Ultimately — they stand accused. And it's a brilliant move by Jesus. He says — I don't accuse you. Moses accuses you. The greatest prophet in the OT — Moses — who wrote the Torah — he accuses them for their lack of faith.

It was Moses who said in his farewell sermon that one day there would come another prophet — a prophet greater than him. And like Moses — he would bring about an exodus from slavery. But his Exodus would be of a greater glory than the one out of Egypt. Instead of delivering one nation from a slavery of harsh labor — there would come one who would deliver people from every nation from the ultimate slavery of sin and death.

Jesus is looking at a group of men who built their worth in value on their knowledge and understanding of Scripture and he's saying — to miss seeing that Moses pointed to me is to miss the entire point — and because of that — Moses accuses you.

Friends — this can happen to anyone. Jesus himself can be standing right in front of you and you could miss him if your allegiance, affection, and attention is directed somewhere else. That's why Jesus's last question to them isn't just for them. It's also for us. Will you believe in Jesus? What are you going to make of him?

And the way you answer the question has massive implications for your life. Remember — what you believe drives what you do and ultimately determines who you become. And when you believe in Jesus Christ — he will shape your desires and you will start to live like he lived and ultimately he is committed to making you become like him. That's the hope of the Gospel.

2 Corinthians 3:18

And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

When we believe that our only lasting glory does from God the Father through God the Son, we will be transformed into the image of Christ from one degree of glory to another.

What we behold — what we believe — what we worship — we will become either for our ruin or our restoration.

The things Jesus says are very different from what any other teacher has said. Others say, 'This is the truth about the universe. This is the way you ought to go,' but He says, 'I am the Truth, and the Way, and the Life.' He says, 'No man can reach absolute reality, except through Me. Try to retain your own life and you will be inevitably ruined. Give yourself away and you will be saved.; He says, 'If you are ashamed of Me, if, when you hear this call, you turn the other way, I also will look the other way when I come again as God without disguise.

If anything whatever is keeping you from God and from me, whatever it is, throw it away. If it is your eye, pull it out. If it is your hand, cut it off. If you put yourself first you will be last. Come to Me everyone who is carrying a heavy load, I will set that right. Your sins, all of them, are wiped out, I can do that. I am Re-birth, I am Life. Eat ME, drink Me, I am your Food. And finally, do not be afraid, I have overcome the whole Universe.' That is the issue.

'What are we to make of Christ?' There is no question of what we can make of Him; it is entirely a question of what He intends to make of us. You must accept or reject the story.

Let's Pray.