

Bible Fellowship Teaching Plan for John 5:18-29 (May 24, 2026)

Jesus: The Son of the Father, Giver of Life and Judge of All

Central Truth: Jesus Christ is fully equal with the Father, perfectly united with Him in purpose and power, and He possesses the authority to give life and execute judgment.

John's purpose (20:31): "These are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."

Main Theme: This passage contains one of the clearest declarations of Jesus' deity in all the Gospels.

Introduction: the events immediately following Jesus' healing of the man who had lain at the Pool of Bethesda for 38 years. The Jewish leaders condemn Jesus for healing the man on the Sabbath.

Key Verse: "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."--John 5:24

I. The Conflict Over the Sabbath (verse 18)

A. The religious leaders missed the miracle

- Pharisaic traditions multiplied Sabbath regulations.
- The literal legalism of the Sadducees competed with the Pharisaic traditions, and the man who had been healed was caught in the crossfire.

B. Jesus challenged their misunderstanding

- He told them, "My Father is working until now, and I am working."
- God's rest after creation was not inactivity; He continually sustains and governs creation.

C. Their new complaint: Jesus called God “My Father.” The leaders understood exactly that He meant equality with God, Divine Sonship, and an authority equal to that of the Father.

II. Jesus declares His perfect unity with the Father (verses 19-23)

A. The Son acts in perfect harmony with the Father: “The Son can do nothing of his own accord....” His will and the Father’s will are perfectly united.

B. Jesus perfectly reveals the Father: “Whatever the Father does, the Son does likewise”

C. This unity of purpose and action is the result of the fact that the Father loves the Son

D. And greater works are coming, including raising the dead, giving eternal life, final judgment

Application: True obedience flows from loving fellowship with God.

III. Jesus Has the Authority to Give Life (verses 24-26)

A. The Son gives life as the Father gives life: Life-giving power belongs to God alone, and Jesus wields that same divine authority.

B. Two kinds of life-giving power are in view

- Physical life (the widow’s son, Jairus’ daughter, Lazarus)
- More important is the spiritual life in deliverance from spiritual death

C. Eternal Life Is a Present Possession: “Has passed from death to life.”

D. The voice of the Son brings life: “The dead will hear the voice of the Son of God.” Hearing involves believing and responding in faith.

Application: Salvation is found only through hearing and believing the Word of Christ.

IV. Jesus Has Authority to Judge (verses 27-29)

A. The Father entrusted judgment to the Son: “The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son.” Judgment belongs to God; therefore, this authority confirms Jesus’ deity.

Note: “Judgment” refers more to sentencing after guilt or guiltlessness has been established (3:18: “Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned **already**, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.”)

B. The purpose of this authority: “That all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father.”

- To reject Jesus is to reject the Father.
- Christ deserves worship equal to the Father.

C. Jesus judges as the Son of Man

- He understands humanity fully.
- He was tempted as we are, yet was without sin.

D. The Coming Resurrection: Two eternal destinies await humanity:

- Resurrection of life for those who believe Christ.
- Resurrection of judgment for those who refuse to believe Christ.

Teaching Emphasis: Every person will respond to Jesus either in faith or rejection, and where and how they will spend eternity hangs on that response.

V. Summary and transition: Jesus Seeks Only the Father’s Will (verse 30)

A. Perfect Submission: “I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me.” Jesus’ judgments are righteous because they perfectly reflect the Father.

B. The Perfect Example of Obedience: every word, thought, every action fulfilled the Father’s will.

Practical Applications

1. Beware of Legalism: religious rules must never replace love, mercy, and truth.
2. Honor the Son: to worship Christ is to worship God.
3. Respond to Christ today: eternal life is available now through faith in Him.
4. Live in the light of eternity: every life is moving toward resurrection and judgment.

Discussion Questions

Why were the Jewish leaders more concerned with Sabbath regulations than celebrating the healing of the man at the Pool of Bethesda?

What does Jesus mean when He says He can do nothing apart from the Father?

Why is Jesus' claim to give life so significant?

What does it mean to "pass from death to life?"

How does this passage reveal the full deity of Christ?

How should the reality of resurrection and judgment affect our daily lives?

Closing Challenge: The healed man at Bethesda experienced physical restoration, but Jesus revealed that His mission reaches far beyond physical healing. He alone gives eternal life, raises the dead, and judges the world. Every person must decide whether to honor the Son through faith or reject Him and remain under judgment. The voice of the Son still calls today: those who hear and believe will experience the fullness of all that was intended to be.

Sunday School Lesson for May 24, 2026
John 5:18-29

Welcome to Sunday School on the go from the First Baptist Church in Tallassee. I'm Jim Glass, one of the teachers in the Pairs and Spares Class, and, on this last Sunday in May, we're well into our study of the deep and wondrously profound gospel according to John, whose purpose in writing this book, as he tells us in chapter twenty, verse 31, is "so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."

Following Pastor Trey's sermon on the third of Jesus' miracles--those "signs" that John tells us about--the healing of the man who had been lying beside the Pool of Bethesda for some 38 years--following Trey's message about this third sign, we'll address the Lord's response to the Jewish leaders who considered Him to have violated the Law of Moses by healing the man on a Sabbath, but also for another reason that we find in our study today from John, chapter five, verses eighteen through 29.

It's hard to imagine the cold, cruel, hard-heartedness that drove these Jewish leaders to criticize, let alone, condemn, Jesus for healing this man who, as John tells us back in verse five, had been an invalid for 38 years. Somehow, the man didn't know at first Who it was Who had healed him, so, when he was confronted by the Jewish leaders to explain why he was carrying his mat on the Sabbath--something they had determined was a violation of the Law of Moses--, the man had told them--verse eleven: "The man who healed me, that man said to me, 'Take up your bed, and walk,'" but he didn't know the Man's name. Later, after Jesus spoke to him in the Temple, the man told the Jewish leaders that it was Jesus Who had healed him.

"And this," John writes in verse sixteen, "was why the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because he was doing these things on the Sabbath." Now, this wasn't the first time Jesus had been accused of violating the Sabbath. As

you read the other gospels, Jesus has already been charged with allowing His disciples to harvest grain on the Sabbath--Mark, chapter two; He had healed the man with the withered hand on the Sabbath--Mark, chapter three. Later, there would be a crippled woman whom Jesus healed on the Sabbath in Luke, chapter thirteen, and the man of John, chapter nine, who was born blind and had his sight restored on the Sabbath. In recording this incident, John tells us that it was works of this kind, done on the Sabbath, that incited the Jews to persecute Jesus.

In their minds, to carry a burden on the Sabbath was forbidden in the Old Testament. In the fourth of the Ten Commandments, we read, "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath of the LORD your God; in it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and made it holy." Over the years, Jewish leaders had compiled a multitude of instructions about all the things you could and couldn't do on the Sabbath.

Lest we dismiss this emphasis on the Jewish leaders' attempts to obey the letter of the Law regarding the keeping of the Sabbath, let's not forget the highly-divisive competition between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, both of whose members sat on the ruling Council of Seventy known as the Sanhedrin. The Pharisees and the Sadducees had an on-going disagreement about a lot of things, and one was about how strictly the rules about the Sabbath were to be obeyed.

In addition to their high regard for the Law of Moses, the Pharisees put significant weight on the "oral tradition," of the elders--, believing this interpretive framework, passed down from generation to generation, would help clarify the written Law. This oral tradition addressed practical questions about exactly how one was to "keep the Sabbath holy," but many of them

were meant to help keep the Sabbath “relevant” by specifying how certain exceptions could be made to the Law.

For example, on the Sabbath, you could borrow jars of wine and oil from your neighbor, but you couldn’t ask to borrow them. If you asked, that would require a transaction, and a transaction might involve writing, and writing was forbidden on the Sabbath. According to the Pharisees, you could travel only a thousand yards from your own house. But, if you stretched a rope across the end of the street where your house was and made it a thousand yards long, you could travel another thousand yards. If you sent a servant ahead of you with enough food for two meals, that was considered establishing a residence and you could go a thousand yards from there. So they spent a lot of time stretching ropes and depositing food trying to figure out how they could get where they wanted to go on the Sabbath, and these regulations became a wearisome, exhausting rut of religion, that dragged them down rather than lifting them up.

The Sadducees, on the other hand, because they held firmly to a fiercely literal, legalistic interpretation of the Law of Moses revealed in the first five books of the Old Testament--we might say they were the original strict constructionists--they meticulously followed all the prohibitions against work on the Sabbath detailed in the Old Testament while rejecting all the Pharisees’ 39 various categories of Sabbath regulations. For example, in Exodus, chapter 35, verse three, we read, “You shall kindle no fire in all your dwelling places on the Sabbath day.” The Sadducees believed that the word translated in every English translation as “kindle” or “light” was to be understood as “burn, with the result that you could have neither light nor heat in your house on the Sabbath. The Pharisees, on the other hand, agreed with the Sadducees’ interpretation of the word but said it was okay to bring wood that was already burning into your house on the Sabbath.

So now, these two groups representing two competing traditions were vying for the honor of who would be the strongest advocate for the Sabbath,

with both of them targeting Jesus for what He's just done, and this man, who's just been gloriously healed from an extreme disability after 38 years, has been caught in the cross-fire.

This is the first occasion of open hostility towards Jesus reported in John's gospel. Jesus didn't hold back from healing the man simply because there were man-made regulations that prohibited works of healing on the Sabbath. In answer to their complaint that He had violated the Sabbath, He tells them in verse seventeen: "My Father is working until now, and I am working." All of a sudden, the anger split between the man who had been healed for carrying his mat on the Sabbath and Jesus for having healed the man on the Sabbath is brought to bear completely on Jesus.

In our introduction to John's gospel, we said that the gospel of John is a pool in which a child could wade and an elephant swim. In the verses that follow, that pool quickly becomes increasingly deeper, and a complete explanation of the Lord's words here would take much more time than we have. Drawing on another analogy, the Lord Jesus weaves an intricate, wonderfully complex tapestry of Who He is, what He does, and why He is able to do what He does in the next fourteen verses.

For example, verse 17 offers us a wealth of information about Who God is. It describes the relationship between Jesus and the Father, it tells us what God has been doing since He ceased His work in creation, and it tells us about our Lord's collaboration with the work that His Father was doing.

What now upset the Jews so much was that Jesus called God, "My Father." When the Jews spoke about God, they often referred to Him as "our Father." If they ever spoke of God using the more personal phrase, "my Father," they would always qualify it by adding something like "in heaven" to avoid any suggestion that they were claiming an improper familiarity with God. But not Jesus. He spoke of His relationship with the Father in the clearest words possible. He was the unique, one-and-only Son of God.

In saying, “My Father is working until now,” He wanted to correct their misunderstanding about the commandment by telling them that the rest of God is not inactivity. In the creation account in Genesis, we read that in six days God completed His work in the creation of the heavens and the earth; then, on the seventh day, He left off, He rested, He ceased from His work in creation. But Jesus says that God is even now working, even to this very moment. God is directing history to a purposeful conclusion.

Well, even the Jews of that day believed that. Philo, the first-century Jewish historian and philosopher wrote, “God never ceases making, but as it is the property of fire to burn and of snow to chill, so it is the property of God to *make*.” God didn’t just create the world and wind it up to go on its own, God is active even now in sustaining His creation. God was by no means idle after the six days of creation. Our Lord says, “Even now He is working.” God began creating on Day 1 and He is still working to bring all things to a conclusion at the end of time.

The problem for the Jewish leaders wasn’t so much the idea that God was working but that Jesus identified God as “My Father,” and that was His justification for “working”--as they called it--on the Sabbath. They fixated on one point in that great response, namely, that He claimed Sonship in a special sense and justified His right to disregard the Sabbath law for that reason. Now, the charge of Sabbath-breaking fades into the background as the Jews pile onto Jesus’ calling God “My Father,” thereby--verse eighteen--“making Himself equal with God”--which He was, but they weren’t willing to even consider the possibility.

In saying that the Lord Jesus was “Making himself equal with God,” the Jews understood that calling God his Father implied equality with God. The Jews were the best interpreters of their own language, and, since Jesus didn’t deny the correctness of their interpretation, it follows that He meant for them to believe that He was in fact, as they had correctly reasoned, the Son of God

and God Himself. If He were not equal with God, don't you think He would have corrected them to clear Himself of a charge of blasphemy?

The interpretation of the Jews was very natural and genuine. Jesus not only said that God was his Father, but He added that He had the same right to work on the Sabbath that God had. The Jews now had two pretenses for seeking to kill Him: one for making Himself equal with God--which they considered blasphemy--and the other for violating the Sabbath. The penalty for each of these was death according to Leviticus, chapter 24, verses eleven through fourteen and Numbers, chapter fifteen, verse 35.

This gives Jesus an opportunity of more clearly describing His relation to God. Of all the messages that our Lord delivered to those who heard Him, what we find in verses nineteen through thirty deals explicitly with Who Jesus is. It may not draw the pictures in our minds like Jesus as the "bread of life" or the "I am" sayings of our Lord, but nowhere else in the gospels do we find our Lord making such a formal, systematic, and orderly declaration of His unity with the Father, His divine commission and authority, and the proof of His Messiahship. In the end, it was the kind of claims that we have in this passage that aroused the hostility of the Jewish leaders to the point that they had Him arrested and crucified.

He first explains that He is in such perfect harmony with God that it's impossible for Him either to heal the man who had lain at the pool for 38 years or any other work from His own initiative. Verse nineteen: "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.'"

The "truly, truly," or "verily, verily" that our Lord begins this proclamation with / is an assertion of the high authority from which He delivers the words that follow. The word in Greek is "amen," and John records the Lord using the double "amen" some 25 times. It's a doubly strong

affirmation that what's about to be said is absolutely certain. With this word, Jesus--Himself the "Amen" of Revelation, chapter three, verse fourteen--assures His hearers that what He declares is absolutely true.

"I can of myself do nothing." He had power to do it, but no permission and no desire to do anything other than what the Father had placed in His job description--if we can call it that. So focused was He on His Divine mission objective and so conditioned to submit Himself to it, that He could neither misinterpret His Father's will nor oppose it. His interests, His views, His purpose, His actions, His attitudes, His thoughts were identical to those of His Father. Because of the deep, abiding, unbreakable bond between Father and Son, it was the joy of His life to do the will of His Father: "whatever the Father does, that / the Son does likewise."

Alexander MacLaren puts it like this: "He, as perfect Son of God, is perfectly one with the Father in will and act, and so knit to Him in sympathy that a self-originated action is impossible, not by reason of [lack] of power, but by reason of unity of being."

One commentator adds, "This perfect filial feeling had no doubt its root in the eternal relation of the Son to the Father. It was the continuance, upon earth and under new conditions, of the life He already had enjoyed with the Father. Having assumed human nature, He could reveal Himself only so far as that nature allowed Him. His revelation, for example, was not universal, but local, confined to one place; His human nature being necessarily confined to one place. He did not assert superiority to all human law; He paid taxes; He recognised lawful authority; He did not convince men of His Divinity by superiority to all human infirmities; He ate, slept, died as ordinary men. But through all this He maintained a perfect harmony with the Divine will. It was this which differentiated Him from ordinary men, that He maintained throughout His life an attitude of undoubting trust in the Father and devotion to Him. It was through the human will of the Lord that the Divine will of the Eternal Son uniformly worked and used the whole of His human nature."

Jesus' total, absolute submission and obedience to the Father is, of course, the standard by which our submission and obedience to God are measured today.

The perfect unity between the Father and the Son is expressed negatively-- "I can do nothing"--then positively-- "the Son does as the Father." But it's not just in His actions alone that He defines their unity. Jesus deepens his explanation of the relation between God the Father and God the Son by continuing in verse twenty, saying, "For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing." We heard almost this exact same thing in chapter three, verse 35: "The Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hand." The great love that the Father has for the Son compels the Father to reveal everything that He is doing, and the Son's response is nothing less than loving imitation of what He sees the Father doing.

So great is this love that the Father has for the Son that He shows the Son what He's doing. Jesus didn't have to try to guess what His Father wanted Him to do--He showed Him, just as clearly as Joseph might have shown the young Jesus how to use the various tools in the carpenter's shop to craft a yoke for a pair of oxen or repair a chair. The only difference is that what Jesus saw His Father doing was part of an internal and spiritual process.

The word for love here is not the agape love we're so familiar with, but the word for love that's more personal, individual, and tender, often called "brotherly love." It's an expression of warm affection, friendship, or fond attachment. While agape love focuses on a self-giving commitment to the well-being of someone else, this "phileo" love is more of a felt emotion that flows from the relational intimacy and personal delight in someone else.

Jesus was telling them, "What you saw in the complete healing of this man who had lain, completely disabled, at the pool of Bethesda for 38 years is just one result of what I do as I see My Father doing. "Greater works than these," He says in the second part of verse twenty, "Greater works than these

will he show him, so that you may marvel.” The healing of this man was a quick glimpse into the power of Jesus to do so much more, including granting eternal life.

The purpose of Jesus’ “greater works” was not, of course, simply to cause people to marvel. People would not be able to stop marveling at the “works” of Jesus, but, as they marveled, they would be faced with a choice--“Do I believe that the One Who offered this sign of His Oneness with the Father is truly the Savior of the world, or do I reject this sign and choose to hide in darkness as the Jewish leaders were doing at that very moment.” It’s the decision we read about a couple of weeks ago in Jesus’ conversation with Nicodemus in chapter three, verse eighteen: “Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.”

The word “work” is used in John’s gospel here for the first time and becomes the word Jesus uses to identify what the world regards as “signs and wonders”--“supernatural miracles of power and grace.” These “greater works” are the subject of what Jesus talks about in the next nine verses, including raising the dead, eternal judgment, the granting of eternal life, and the resurrection of the dead to either life or judgment.

The first of these “greater works” that Jesus will show to authenticate His relation to the Father is that of raising the dead--verse 21: “For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will.” The power over life and death belongs to God. In Deuteronomy, chapter 32, verse 39, the Lord says, “I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal; and there is none that can deliver out of my hand.” This power over physical death was seen in the life of the son of the widow of Zarephath in First Kings, chapter seventeen, and the Shunamite woman’s son in Second Kings, chapter four. Several times in the daily prayers of the Jews, God was called upon as the One Who “quickens the dead.”

The Jews didn't doubt that God had power to raise the dead. Jesus expressly affirms it here and says He has the power to do likewise: "so also the Son gives life to whom he will." Jesus has the same authority and power over death that the Father has. Since such power is one of the highest attributes of God, it follows that He must be God.

This wide-ranging declaration is made in its broadest sense and includes both those who are physically dead as well as those who are spiritually dead. In the other gospels, we read about Jesus restoring life to the widow's son at Nain and the daughter of the elder of the synagogue, and, in John's gospel, we'll see it in the raising of Lazarus in chapter eleven. As to those who are spiritually dead, Paul explained to the followers of Christ in Corinth in his first letter to them, chapter fifteen, verse 22, that: "For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive," and Jesus Himself told Martha at the tomb of Lazarus in John, chapter eleven, verse 25: "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live."

As if this announcement that He has the same power as the Father to raise the dead and give life to them weren't disturbing enough for the close-minded prejudices of the Jewish leaders of that day, our Lord tells His hearers in verse 22, "The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son." Of course, the Jews of that day believed that the Father was the judge of all people.

Once again, Jesus is declaring His unity and equality with God. Like the power over life and death, judgment is the prerogative of God alone, yet the Father has entrusted the work of judging the world to the Son--a work that only God can do since it requires the omniscient ability to see the heart and understand the motive behind every thought, every act, and every word. And God the Father has appointed this task to His Son.

"But," someone might ask, "I thought Jesus didn't come to judge the world. That's what He said back in chapter three, verse seventeen, and, in

chapter twelve, verse 47, He says, ‘I did not come to judge the world but to save the world.’” That’s true. The great objective of His coming to the world was to give life, not to condemn--not to cut us off eternally from life and from God--but to open a way to the Father and to be our life. But His very coming and the offer He makes to be our Savior and Lord present every soul with a critical choice--to believe that He is Who He says He is or not to believe Who He says He is.

The word we have translated as “judgment” refers more to the handing down of the sentence than the process of deciding the sentence. In this case, the decision has already been made by the individual, and Jesus merely ratifies the decision. So, this sentencing is the unavoidable flip side of being saved. As Jesus said in chapter three, verse eighteen, “Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.” There’s no need for a decision to be made for those who refuse to believe, because they’ve already made the decision, been found guilty, and condemned. Jesus doesn’t make them dead; they’re spiritually dead already and cannot be made alive unless they believe. This is the judgment, and this judicial process wasn’t the objective, but the consequence of Jesus’ mission.

If Jesus has been entrusted with this judgment, He must also have the power to keep alive those who believe, so the two prerogatives that He speaks of here--giving life to whom He will and administering all judgment--are tied together. Judgment is not always punitive; sometimes it’s a finding of “not guilty.” John, chapter three, verse eighteen: “Whoever believes in him is not condemned;” and John writes in First John, chapter five, verse eleven, “And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life;” So those who believe--those who have entrusted their lives to Christ and live in Him--do not die because “the Son gives life to whom He will.”

Why did the Father entrust all judgment to the Son?--verse 23: so “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.” In criticizing Jesus for breaking the Sabbath, the Jewish leaders were actually dishonoring the Father. The leaders were dishonoring the Father by accusing His Son of blasphemy, but worship is due Him, because the honor that’s due to the Father is due to the Son as well.

To honor the Son is to affirm His divine Sonship, His full deity, His death on the cross to pay the full penalty for our sin. In honoring the Father, we honor the Son Whom He sent. To dishonor the Son is to dishonor the Father, because it was He Who sent His Son. This, of course, was the point of Jesus’ parable about the tenants in Matthew, chapter 21.

This, by the way, is one of the clearest declarations the Lord Jesus makes affirming the fact that He is God. Since the Son is to be honored just as the Father is honored, it follows that He must be equal with the Father. To “honor the Father” is an act of worship. If the Lord Jesus did not intend to teach that He ought to be worshipped, and to be regarded as equal with God, He would not have said what we have here in this verse. The writer of the letter to the Hebrews begins his exaltation of Christ with these words, beginning in the first verse: “Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power.”

In verse 24, Jesus intensifies His message with a subtle shift from speaking in the third person--“the Son”--to speaking in the first person: “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.” Not only is this next declaration personal, it begins, as His words in verse nineteen,

with that profound prelude: “truly, truly.” If the Jewish leaders had somehow missed the point of what He’s said before, they shouldn’t miss this one.

The hearing of the word of Jesus is put in the closest connection to believing the Father Who sent Him. This hearing is not simply recognizing that someone is speaking, but responding appropriately to what is being said, and that appropriate response is to believe. The word of Christ imparts--brings about--belief, just as Peter explained in chapter one, verse 21 of his first letter when he wrote, you “are believers in God,”--verse 23--“since you have been born again, ... through the living and abiding word of God.”

The result of a person being reborn to eternal life is that he or she “does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.” Simply by hearing the word the Lord was / even then speaking and believing through a transference of faith in yourself to faith in God brings about an immediate redirection of your eternal destiny. The judgment is over, the books are closed, condemnation is no longer possible. The one who believes will not perish but has--right now and forever--eternal life. Paul speaks of this transformation, writing to the followers of Christ in Colossae--chapter one, verse fourteen: “He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.” Complete, total, irreversible, everlasting--a present possession--“from death to life.”

Whoever hears and heeds the Word of the Lord has eternal life--it’s a present possession. It’s not something that we should doubt. You’ve probably heard people say, “Well, I hope I go to heaven when I die,” but here our Lord says that those who hear and heed the words of Jesus now have eternal life as a present possession.

And this eternal life isn’t something we need to wait for--Jesus was even then offering it to His hearers--verse 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.” Once again, He introduces His words with the solemn “truly, truly” to emphasize the authority behind His words and the certainty that they are true. And, again, there appears to be a two-fold meaning to His words.

There is a sense in which those physically dead--the widow’s son, Jairus’ daughter, and Lazarus--will hear the voice of the Lord, rise from their sleep of death, and be restored to life, but the greater meaning of the Lord’s words center on those who are spiritually dead who will pass from death to life as they hear His word and believe the One Who sent Him / and, in receiving the eternal life that believing brings, discover that there is no condemnation for them, the curse of death is broken, and their enjoyment of eternal life begins.

The word “hear” in the part of the verse that reads, “those who hear will live” doesn’t refer to the simple recognition of someone speaking--it’s hearing with a corresponding response of obedience. Everyone will hear the voice of the Son of God, but not everyone will hear that voice with the necessary response of believing in such a way that they will enter into eternal life.

Here in verse 25, Jesus returns to speaking in the third person, apparently to remind His hearers of what He said previously about the connection between the Father and the Son and the fact that the Son is working just as the Father is working. That pattern carries on in verse 26 as the explanation of why the Son of God has this power: “For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself.” The previous declarations of the shared nature and attributes of the Godhead are repeated and developed even further. As the Father has life in Himself--in other words--as He is the essential, eternal, original, and underivative source of all life, “He has granted the Son also to have life in himself.” This proclamation led John to write in his gospel and in his first letter, “In Him was life.”

In the Lord’s incarnation--as He set aside everything that was rightfully His to take upon Himself a human body--God gave Him back the power to

have life in Himself. When He became man, our Lord lost nothing of the infinite fullness of life-giving power that belongs to God alone. Speaking to God, David wrote in Psalm 36, verse nine, “For with you is the fountain of life.” Now, Jesus says He can draw out of that same fountain to give life to “whom he will”--verse nineteen.

Then, in verse 27, the Lord Jesus circles back to weave the theme of judgment into this beautiful tapestry once again: “And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man.” He is able to raise the dead, then allow those who choose darkness over the light and refuse to believe to spend eternity separated from God while giving life to those found “not guilty” of their sin because Jesus bore their guilt, thus executing judgment not only because He is the divine judge of the universe, but because He is the Son of Man. He took upon Himself our human nature, experienced what it is to be human, yet was completely without sin. He’s walked where we walk. The writer of the letter to the Hebrews reminds us in chapter four, verse fifteen, that “We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”

// As the Lord Jesus spoke these words to the Jewish leaders, you could imagine their heads whirling, their anger rising, and their indignation boiling as the Lord Jesus made it crystal clear to them that He would do greater works than healing the man at the pool, and that He was the Son of God Who was the source of life, able to give life to the dead and Who is the ultimate judge of everyone, including them. So, either pointing back to what they’ve just heard or pointing forward to what He’s going to say next, He tells them in verse 28, “Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.”

All those who have died--of every age, every nationality, every level of morality and religious devotion--even those whose bodies have returned to the dust from which they came--and not just those whose bodies were literally buried in the earth but all those who have perished--will receive their just reward. This would have been a recognized aspect of Jewish eschatology. What kind of body they will have and whether this is a physical or a spiritual resurrection, the Lord doesn't say, but neither question is really important here. What is important is 1) that everyone's existence continues with their personal identity intact from the time of death until this moment; 2) there is no possibility of changing your status by repenting of the evil that has been done in this life and believing after death, and 3) the resurrection of life and the resurrection of judgment are the only two possibilities that await those who have experienced physical death.

When the Lord descends from heaven with a cry of command--First Thessalonians, chapter four, verse sixteen--the allocation of penalty and blessed reward will commence. Those who believed Him, those who heard and heeded His Word, those who have done good because--Ephesians, chapter two, verse ten--they are "his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them--they will live and reign with the Lord forever. On the other hand, those who refused to believe Him, who chose the darkness rather than the light, who refused to hear and did not heed His words / will get just what they always wanted--to be free from God. And so God will let them go to a place where He is not. If where God is / there is eternal peace, then where God is not there is eternal torment. If where God is / there is the glorious light of Christ, then where God is not there is the cold, bitter silence of eternal darkness.

Concluding this part of His message in verse thirty, the Lord summarizes what He's said in the previous thirteen verses and prefaces His comments that follow in verses 31 through the end of the chapter to substantiate the extraordinary and, to the Jewish leaders, astonishing claims He's just made.

Once again, He goes back to speaking in the first person: “I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge,” and His judgments are righteous because they replicate the judgments of God Himself. In every decision, every act, every word, every thought, doing God’s will was perfectly accomplished in the Son.

As “the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature,” so the writer of the letter to the Hebrews tells us, “In him was life, and the life was the light of men.” Because He is the Son of God and the Son of Man who does only what He sees the Father doing because the Father loves Him, He alone has the right to give life and to reward each of us according to our response to Him. The hour is coming when those whose lives reveal their genuine belief through works of righteousness will behold the outcome of their faith, the full and final salvation of their souls; while those who refused to believe, who loved darkness because their deeds and the hearts behind them were evil, will experience the resurrection of judgment for all eternity. This pool is very deep, and we only briefly strayed from the shallow end.

Thank you for being a part of our study of the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus seen through John’s eyes that’s meant to lead you to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that, by believing in Him, you might experience the fullness of life that can only come in Him. Next week, following Trey’s message about Jesus’ feeding the five thousand with five barley loaves and two fish in the first fifteen verses of chapter six, we’ll follow Jesus as He walks on the water to the other side of the Sea of Galilee where we’ll hear the first part of His declaration that He is the Bread of life in verses sixteen through 36.

As always, as it’s still a good thing to do, keep calm, trust in the Lord, and wash your hands! God bless you!

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