



**How Jesus Deals With the Religious
A Conversation With the Religious Aristocracy of Jerusalem
John 5:17-47**

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John 5:17–18

“But He answered them, “My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working.” For this reason therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God.” (NASB 2020)

John is leaving no doubt as to the purpose behind this book. Jesus is once again talking in a manner that only God or His direct representative could. The Jews are saying He has made Himself equal with God, Jesus will set the record straight. He is not the Father, but He does act on His authority and acts in complete obedience to Him.

Does God still speak today? The conclusion of the Jewish leadership proved that they would have answered that question with a no, even though John the Baptist, the last Old Testament style Prophet, was busy doing ministry out in the desert. And then there is the man standing in front of them, Jesus. By the way, Jesus has just performed a miracle that per Isaiah, clearly attests to Him being Messiah. Jesus is setting the record straight and when we finished last time, the leadership was all upset over Jesus claiming to be God.

Their actions state that for them, they believe that God is no longer speaking today. If you said no, then they would agree with you that He spoke only in the past. Jesus will deal with that presumption.



Here at Calvary, we take the scriptures seriously and as such we believe God is indeed still speaking to us today.

God speaks to us through His word. He can also speak to us through events as He grows us and conforms our minds to His. We may say, "oh, what a coincidence," but God is in every detail of our life.

And one more thing, God may sometimes speak audibly to someone or use a vision or dream. If He has indeed spoken to you, His words would be in full agreement with what He has already said in His word.

He does not contradict Himself.

2 Timothy 3:16–17

"All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching the truth, rebuking error, correcting faults, and giving instruction for right living, so that the person who serves God may be fully qualified and equipped to do every kind of good deed." (GNB)

Jesus is going to have a serious heart to heart chat with the Jewish religious leadership. He loves them, He wants to see them repent, but He also knows their hearts. He is intentionally confronting them and will be giving them a warning, "you ain't seen nothing yet." More Messiah attesting miracles are coming.

He will be teaching two things to them, "that a man can know God because God the Father is revealed in God the Son. In the second part of the discourse (vv. 31–47) Jesus gives evidence for this claim." (Boice 2005, 387)

John 5:19–23

"Therefore Jesus answered and was saying to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in the same way. For the Father loves the Son and shows Him all things that He Himself is doing; and the Father will show Him greater works than these, so that you will be amazed. For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so the Son also gives life to whom He wishes. For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son, so that all will honor the Son just as they honor the Father. The one who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him." (NASB 2020)

Jesus is setting the record straight. He is not equal to or of the same rank as God the Father. "From John's standpoint, Jesus is fully deity (1:1, 18; 20:28), but he also submits to the Father, whose rank is greater than his own (10:29; 14:28)." (Keener 2012, 648)

Jesus is obedient to the Father, and the Father reveals all that He is doing to the Son. What they have just witnessed, but glossed over, was a lame man being healed, something only Messiah could do. But they stressed over the "doing work on the Sabbath" issue.

Isaiah 35:6

"Then the lame will leap like a deer, the mute tongue will shout for joy; for water will burst in the desert, streams in the arid rift valley." (NET 2nd ed.)

They missed this. Jesus is deliberate with His language here as He discusses this with the Leadership. Jesus says He sees the Father doing and uses the present tense to say that. Then He says that what the Father then does, again present tense, He also does, present tense. There is a real time ongoing relationship here, this is not based on visions like with Prophets in the past. The Father also will show Him even greater things in the future meaning that the Son will do even more Messiah confirming acts in the days to come.



The Father shows all things to the Son, nothing is held back. And here is a preview of coming attractions. Folks walking out of graves.

John 5:21

“For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so the Son also gives life to whom He wishes.” (NASB 2020)

This will not be the last time Jesus intentionally acts on a Sabbath. Healing someone who is lame, is a creative act. “Thus Jesus was performing works as his Father had performed in creation. The image of continuing God’s creative work on the Sabbath would strongly imply Jesus’ deity.” (Keener 2012, 649)

The act of healing someone who was paralyzed was magnificent. But compared to what God and His greater works are, that was nothing. As the Father is life, so is Jesus. Greater acts include healing to include raising folks from the dead. God does that, but this is new, the Son also gives life.

He does that repeatedly today. Jesus can take someone who is spiritually dead and raise them to spiritual life changing their destination and giving them eternal life.

Notice the significance of “to whom he is pleased to give it.” People may not command the miracle. The Son gives life where he chooses, not where people choose. (Morris 1995, 279)

And one other thing, God has committed the pronouncement of all final judgement to the Son. Not the pretend judgment being brought to bear by the leadership. That also is new to the Jews.

John 5:22–23

“For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son, so that all will honor the Son just as they honor the Father. The one who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him.” (NASB 2020)

We need to understand a little bit about the culture of the time to fully understand this. This was a shame/honor culture in the middle east. Thinking was still more along the lines of what is best for the group or family rather than for the individual. If the Son is honored, so the Father is honored as well, and the reverse also holds.

The challenge from the Jews reflects hypocrisy, but they also want to retain the honor of saying who can do what in and around the Temple. “The religious authorities valued being able to teach the people. Jesus is claiming to have that honor.” (Richards and James 2020, 165)

As a counter to that, which will come up again, Jesus points out the honor that the Father has bestowed on Him, judgement. Jesus is claiming a higher honor. He also now states there is a way to avoid that judgement.

John 5:24

“Truly, truly, I say to you, the one who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.” (NASB 2020)

The word we have translated here as truly is the word “amen” in the Greek. It is a Hebrew word simply transliterated in the Greek and the English. When Jesus uses this, twice, we need to sit up and take notice. It is a form of solemn attestation that He uses and when He says it, we need to remember it precedes something we must remember. It is Jesus’ way of saying, “you need to pay attention to this.”

As we learn in Revelation 3:14, He is the amen. “It is a Hebrew word meaning “so it is” or “let it be,” derived from a verb meaning “to be firm or sure.”” (Elwell and Comfort 2001, 35)



To the Laodicean church, Jesus identifies Himself as “the Amen.”

This is a reference to Isaiah 65:16 where the Hebrew בְּאֵלֵי אֱמֵן (belohe amen) translates literally as “the God of amen.”

Jesus will use “twenty-five double “amens” in John to authenticate a particularly important or solemn truth. Jesus used this “not so much to direct attention to his divinity as to his authority to speak for God as the messenger of God” (Hawthorne, DJG 7). It emphasized the truthfulness and divine origin of the message. In this context, the Isaianic aspect predominates. Jesus partakes of God’s truthfulness, his binding authority (Isa. 65:16 says whoever invokes a blessing or an oath “will do so by the God of truth”).” (Osborne 2002, 203-204)

Look at it this way, the I Am is saying, twice, so it is. This is truth of the highest order. He has just told the Jews He has been provided the highest honor by being entrusted with judgement from the Father. There are some listening who are wondering, how to avoid that judgement, He tells them how.

He is telling us the same today. Jesus says that if we hear His word, what it is He has to say and believe it, we have everlasting life. That simple act of believing removes judgment.

This statement Jesus makes, forces us to decide about Jesus. He has either just told us a very basic truth which must be followed, or He is a raving lunatic. There is no middle ground. Jesus has already claimed that His life derived from no one, which makes Him the only man on planet earth to ever make that claim and then be able to back it up with the resurrection after being very visibly killed on the cross.

His life is inherent and uncreated. He is self-existent, He has life in Himself, and this is an attribute that only God possesses.

If we will trust Jesus, we shall live; if not, we are dead. Trusting Him is trusting the Father that sent Him, and that Father becomes accessible to our trust when we ‘hear’ Christ’s ‘word.’ (MacLaren 2009, 249)

There is something else that Jesus says here as well, for those who believe, the possession of eternal life, is a current present possession. This is a change now too as well. “Jesus’ statement that believers “have” eternal life in the here and now, having “crossed over from death to life” already in the past (5:24; cf. 1 John 3:14), ran counter to contemporary Judaism, which considered the attainment of eternal life to be a future event. The pronouncement represents one of the strongest affirmations of realized (inaugurated) eschatology in John’s Gospel.” (Köstenberger 2004, 188)

He isn’t done yet either. In case we didn’t understand the first statement, Jesus follows it up with another so that those listening to Him, will get it. It is also there for us to get it too.

John 5:25–29

“Truly, truly, I say to you, a time is coming and even now has arrived, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. For just as the Father has life in Himself, so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself; and He gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man. Do not be amazed at this; for a time is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come out: those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the bad deeds to a resurrection of judgment.” (NASB 2020)

There is that double amen again. He is answering an unasked derogatory question, “when would that be?” Imagine the shock of His very religious listeners when He not only asks what is passing through their minds, but He tells them it is happening right now. “The dead will hear the voice of the Son of God.”



The word for dead is the Greek word νεκροί (nekroi). The dead He is talking about are not the dead who are lying in a tomb, but those who are spiritually dead. Those who have done nothing to change their condition inherited from Adam and Eve and are taking their lead from the enemy, Satan.

Ephesians 2:1–7

“You were dead through the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work among those who are disobedient. All of us once lived among them in the passions of our flesh, doing the will of flesh and senses, and we were by nature children of wrath, like everyone else, **but God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ**—by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.” (NRSVue)

Those who have passed over from death to life have passed over a line of “demarcation between those who have returned to God’s side and those who remain arrayed against him (cf. 1 John 3:14; Wis 7:27; Col 1:13). Response to Jesus’ “word” decided one’s destiny (5:24; 12:48; cf. 5:38), for how one treats envoys indicates how one would treat their sender.” (Keener 2012, 653)

When we come to Christ, everything changes. We have in us, at this present moment in time, eternal life. Jesus explains the honor that has been given Him by the Father and why He can say this.

John 5:26–27.

“For just as the Father has life in Himself, so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself; and He gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man.” (NASB 2020)

Or, in other words, as we have previously discussed, Jesus is God. Jesus has the authority to judge, because He is the Son of Man. When He says that, His listeners would recall that term showing up in Daniel 7.

Daniel 7:13–14

“I was watching in the night visions, And behold, **One like the Son of Man, Coming with the clouds of heaven!** He came to the Ancient of Days, And they brought Him near before Him. Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, That all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, Which shall not pass away, And His kingdom the one Which shall not be destroyed.” (NKJV)

It is because Jesus is the Son of Man, and not simply because he acts as his agent, that the Father has given him authority to judge. (Kruse 2017, 175)

Jesus also refers to two resurrections here.

John 5:28–29

“Do not be amazed at this; for a time is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come out: those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the bad deeds to a resurrection of judgment.” (NASB 2020)

To keep this simple, the first resurrection, which has several events included in it, is the resurrection of all the saved. Yes, it is tied with the rapture of the church and yes, before it is completed, it also includes OT saints and Tribulation saints. All of those who are saved are in the first resurrection.

The second resurrection is for everyone else. It is for judgment. It is the Great White Throne judgement and is for all who said they wanted to be judged by their works.



“They will stand before God who is just and righteous; they will have an opportunity to stand before a Holy God and to plead their case. But God has already warned them; there is no one saved in that judgment. It is only the lost who are brought there, and they will be judged according to their works, because there are degrees in punishment.” (McGee 1991) There is no parole, there is no reduced sentence, there is no house arrest, no community service and there is no probation.

If there was any doubt as to who Jesus is talking about when He uses the term “Son of Man,” He provides testimony and does so in the first person. He is clearly referring to Himself.

John 5:30–32

“I can do nothing on My own. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of Him who sent Me. If I alone testify about Myself, My testimony is not true. There is another who testifies about Me, and I know that the testimony which He gives about Me is true.” (NASB 2020)

There are no hidden agendas with Jesus. He has no program He is following other than to do the Father’s will.

All of us like to have something to help guide us as we do life. If we didn’t, we wouldn’t be here. Jesus looked to one thing as He did ministry and life here on planet earth, “to do the will of the Father.”

So here is the challenge for each of us this week. Wake up tomorrow morning and as you begin the day with the Lord, pray this: “Lord, today I want my life to be focused on following and doing your will. No matter what. It is not about me; it is about You. Help me to do the will of the Father by the power of the Holy Spirit who is already in me.”

Again, Jesus hears what they are thinking, and He answers before they ask.

You want witnesses to all of this. No problem. Because Jesus knows the Torah, He is now going to provide witnesses “based on the accepted legal code of the Torah, the foundation book of the Jews who were Jesus’ opponents. In cases where there is a need for verifiable testimony, it is necessary that there be two or three witnesses to provide corroboration of the matter (cf. Deut 19:15).” (Borchert 1996, 243)

Jesus admits that if He is the sole witness, then His claims which He has just made could be questioned. But again, He is seeking the will of the Father. “The Greek, however, assumes that the condition itself is false (that His testimony is not true) and that the testimony is true. Accordingly, the witnesses are introduced.” (Borchert 1996, 244)

Jesus will call three credible witnesses who will testify that He is indeed equal to the Father. These witnesses will be summarily rejected by His enemies.

John 5:33–35

“You have sent messengers to John, and he has testified to the truth. But the testimony I receive is not from man, but I say these things so that you may be saved. He was the lamp that was burning and shining, and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light.” (NASB 2020)

The first witness is no surprise. John the Baptist testified to the Jewish religious investigation team exactly why he was doing what he was doing. He is the voice of Isaiah 42:11. Jesus even confirms that they sent an investigative team to determine this. But as we discussed when we covered this interview in John 1, it was more about an exercise of power and an attempt to see if they could control the narrative and spin it in their favor.



John challenged them, and some rejoiced in knowing a Prophet was once again operating in Israel, but many did not. They could not control him, so they rejected him and they would also reject him as a witness.

We learn from Matthew that John had some choice words for the team which more than likely would impact on their view of his veracity as a witness.

Matthew 3:7–10

“But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not presume to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father,’ for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham. Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.” (ESV)

Jesus then tells them to look at what He is doing. Take a look at the works. This alludes to the most recent miracle pointing to Him as Messiah.

John 5:36–38

“But the testimony I have is greater than the testimony of John; for the works which the Father has given Me to accomplish—the very works that I do—testify about Me, that the Father has sent Me. And the Father who sent Me, He has testified about Me. You have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His form. Also you do not have His word remaining in you, because you do not believe Him whom He sent.” (NASB 2020)

Jesus is telling them that what He does, shows who He is. He is doing exactly what the Father would have Him do and the miracles are of the sort that scream “Messiah.”

In Matthew, Mark and Luke, Jesus is recorded to have healed many of leprosy and He tells them to go to the Temple and show them and do as the law commands. No one had shown up in centuries with this.

They know that Jesus is in Galilee and suddenly, one after another, people show up having been healed of leprosy. They may have had to go back and reread Leviticus 14 so they would be able to do everything they were required to do, when someone is healed of the disease.

Nicodemus was correct when he said, “Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him.” (John 3:2b, NASB 2020)

In verse 37 the witness is that of YAHWEH in the Old Testament scriptures. Jesus perfectly reflects the Father in all that He says and does and because the religious establishment had lost touch with all but the legal aspects of the Word, they did not recognize that when Jesus spoke, YAHWEH was speaking.

That is a primary reason why we teach, here at Calvary, the Bible chapter by chapter and verse by verse. Yes, we will do an occasional topical series, but what we will do is teach through the Bible so that all of us know what the voice of God sounds like.

The reason is so we all know what He sounds like and what is sound doctrine. This way, when you hear someone who is just a little off, you know. Anything I say, or anything you hear anyone else say, check it out and see if the scripture supports it. Be a Berean.

Acts 17:11

“The people there were more open-minded than the people in Thessalonica. They listened to the message with great eagerness, and every day they studied the Scriptures to see if what Paul said was really true.” (GNB)



But as we study the Scriptures, we need to accept it on its terms and not ours. Jesus moves to the witness of the Scriptures.

John 5:39–47

“You examine the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is those very Scriptures that testify about Me; and yet you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life. I do not receive glory from people; but I know you, that you do not have the love of God in yourselves. 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. How can you believe, when you accept glory from one another and you do not seek the glory that is from the one and only God? Do not think that I will accuse you before the Father; the one who accuses you is Moses, in whom you have put your hope. For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote about Me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?” (NASB 2020)

The people that Jesus is talking to know their Bible. They knew, literally by memory, the Torah and much of the rest of the Scriptures. They knew that in them is the solution for all of mankind and that it is indeed the truth. They knew that eternal life was in there. But also, there are multiple references throughout the Old Testament about Jesus Christ.

For example, there are at least 22 prophecies about Jesus Christ in Isaiah 52 and 53 alone. The life of Joseph points to Jesus in at least 100 or more ways. In fact, the “Old Testament contains more than three hundred references to the Messiah that were fulfilled in Jesus.” (McDowell 2006, 197)

Searching is one thing, but comprehending what it is they are saying is something entirely different. Scriptures do give life; they are correct in that. But Jesus says, they point to Him. We saw evidence of that with what was said back in John 1:45.

By rejecting Jesus, they are rejecting the life the Scriptures point to. He tells them that. Then Jesus points out to them that what people think of Him is not important to Him.

When He says that, He is implying that they do worry about what people think. What others think is important to the religious leaders. They want to maintain their positions and public opinion is important.

Position is important. Pecking order is important.

As believers, when we start becoming more concerned about what the world thinks of us, we have crossed over that same line.

Jesus says we are to be like Him. When He says, “Follow me,” He is saying that. He is telling all of us, as believers, that following Him means we cease worrying about the opinions of the world. What did we talk about earlier, the will of the Father? You and are are playing to a totally different audience.

As He says this, He also reveals a bit of what He knows about them. They do not have the love of God in them. Why is that? Because they do not love God. This is the group that Jesus was talking about back in John 3:16, they are part of the world.

Jesus came in the name of YAHWEH, and they will reject Him. He then pops out to the Tribulation period and tells them a time is coming when they will accept someone who comes in his own name. This is a hint of why they will sign a 7-year peace deal with the antichrist in the future. It is tied into the rejection taking place here in John 5.

If you have gone to the point that keeping the public happy is more important than what the Lord would want, then who knows who you wind up following sooner or later.



I remember being a representative of the company I was working for at the time to an awards luncheon. It was an interesting time listening to those who had received this award, more based on philanthropy and self-promotion than anything else, over the past few years. As each past winner would get up, they would praise the winner for this year and then make reference to others who came close but didn't quite get there this year. And give you an ad too.

It hit me; they were busy accepting glory from each other. In fact, the winner, when they gave a talk, praised all the others who had gone before and those who were close.

It was literally a group of folks who were gathering to praise each other for no particularly good reason. Nothing had been produced that was new. There was no outstanding technical performance or discovery being lauded, just a lot of back slapping.

I wonder if that was what it was like then. When you seek and receive glory from the world and bend to the opinion of the world to obtain that, then the enemy wins. His goal is to prevent anyone from seeking the glory that would only come from God.

Oooh, my name in lights.

Proverbs 16:18–19

“Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall. It is better to be of a lowly spirit among the poor than to divide the spoil with the proud.” (NRSVue)

Consider this, the religious professionals are a tight knit group. Call it a professional organization. I have been in a few of those over the years. Yes, they also like to congratulate each other too. I am not saying it is wrong, but it does play to our pride, and we must be cautious as we find ourselves in groups like that.

Jesus points out that He is not going to be the one who accuses this group of people. There is someone else who will do that.

John 5:45–47

“Do not think that I will accuse you before the Father; the one who accuses you is Moses, in whom you have put your hope. For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote about Me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?” (NASB 2020)

All Jesus is doing is repeating more forcefully what he said before, that the Scriptures “testify about me” (v. 39), with the implication that if they testify for Jesus, they testify against those who now challenge him. The Scriptures—and consequently Moses who wrote them—accuse his accusers. (Michaels 2010, 337)

I find His parting words to them rather haunting. “But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?” (John 5:47, NASB 2020)

How seriously do we take His word? If the Scriptures, what Moses wrote in the Torah, speaks to Jesus, how did they miss it? When we read the Bible, what do we miss?

Jesus invites us, to ask the author of the Bible to help us understand what is in it. We will cover that when we get to John 14. But there is also another issue too, in order to understand it, we must have the Holy Spirit in us showing us what it means. That can only happen if you have taken His word seriously and believed.

Right now, if you do not know Jesus as your Savior, you have an opportunity to decide. He is God. He is the only way to the Father.



John 14:6

“Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father except through Me.” (NASB 2020)

Romans 3:21–24

“But now God has shown us a way to be made right with him without keeping the requirements of the law, as was promised in the writings of Moses and the prophets long ago. We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are. For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God’s glorious standard. Yet God, in his grace, freely makes us right in his sight. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins.” (NLT)

Romans 10:9–13

“If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by openly declaring your faith that you are saved. As the Scriptures tell us, “Anyone who trusts in him will never be disgraced.” Jew and Gentile are the same in this respect. They have the same Lord, who gives generously to all who call on him. For “Everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved.”” (NLT)

ABC’s of Salvation

- A. Acknowledge that you are a sinner, tell Him that.
- B. Believe that Jesus died on the cross for our sin and that He rose from the dead.
- C. Confess that Jesus is Lord. Tell someone about what you have done.



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