

The Gospel of John: *Know Jesus and Live*

Part 13
John 5:9-30

I. Jesus is on trial

The legal language of the text

- ❖ John 5:10--*So the Jews said to the man who had been healed, It is the Sabbath, and it is not **lawful for you to take up your bed.***
- ❖ John 5:11-- *But he answered them, The man who healed me, that man said to me, Take up your bed, and walk. 12 They asked him, **Who is the man who said to you, Take up your bed and walk ?***
 - This is just like a scene out of Law and Order. To get himself out of trouble with the authorities, the man says something like “You don’t want me! I’m small potatoes! If you let me go, I’ll get you the mastermind behind this Sabbath breaking operation.” The prosecutors then go on to say something like, “I’m listening, who is this mastermind?”
- ❖ John 5:15-17--*The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had healed him. 16 And this was why **the Jews were persecuting Jesus**, because he was doing these things on the Sabbath. 17 But Jesus **answered** them, My Father is working until now, and I am working.*
 - Much of the legal language in this passage is easy to identify. However, the most explicit legal language in the passage will go unnoticed by most. In verse 17, Instead of using the common Greek term which simply means “to reply,” Jesus uses a rare Greek term that is found only in the context of trials and courtrooms, when a formal defense is given against charges that are made.

The first charge: working on the Sabbath

- ❖ John 5:16--*And this was why the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because he was doing these things on the Sabbath.*

The second charge: Jesus says he is equal to God

- ❖ John 5:18--*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.*

II. Jesus’s defense

Jesus’s defense for working on the Sabbath

- It must be noted that Jesus has not commanded this man to do anything that would be considered a breach of biblical Sabbath regulations. It is certainly true that “The Old Testament had forbidden work on the Sabbath. But what is work? The assumption in the Scripture seems to be that work refers to ones customary employment.¹” However, “dominant rabbinic opinion had analyzed the prohibition into thirty-nine classes of work, including taking or carrying anything from one domain to another.²” It was one of these 39 added rules that the man was guilty of breaking, not God’s rule.

¹ D.A. Carson, *The Gospel of John: Pillar New Testament Commentary Series*

² Ibid



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- That said, Jesus does not in any way try claim that he is not working on the Sabbath. In fact he states very plainly that...

- ❖ John 5:17-- *My Father is working until now, and I am working.*

- In saying this, he is saying two things...

(1) God works on the Sabbath

- In saying that God works on the Sabbath, Jesus isn't saying anything controversial. The Jewish rabbis had long concluded that God must indeed always work on the Sabbath since it is he who maintains and rules over all things.
- One might ask, Doesn't this contradict what we see in Genesis?
 - ❖ Genesis 2:1-3--*Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. 2 And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. 3 So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.*
- Though it might seem a contradiction, it is not. The Hebrew word "rested (*sabat*)" doesn't mean relax, kick back, or take a day off. It simply means to cease. Thus Genesis 2:1-3 is teaching us that when God finished creating the universe, he quit creating the universe. It does not teach that God was inactive on the seventh day.

(2) I work on the Sabbath because I am God

- Secular historians often claim that the deity of Christ was invented by Jesus's followers and not by Jesus himself. What they miss, which seems obvious in this text, is that Jesus is making an unambiguous claim to deity. He is saying, "God, my Father, works on the Sabbath and I do too. What does that tell ya?" It tells us that...
 - ❖ Hebrews 1:3--*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.*
- The first charge brought about persecution. However, his defense against this charge brings about a much more severe charge. A charge that brought with it the death penalty if convicted...
 - ❖ John 5:18--*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.*



Jesus's defense for claiming to be God

- So how does Jesus respond to the fact that the Jewish leaders want to kill him? Does he back down? Does he soften his claim? NO WAY! In fact, he goes ahead full bore. Later on in John's gospel we will hear Jesus say things like...
 - ❖ John 10:30--*I and the Father are one.*
 - ❖ John 14:9--*Whoever has seen me has seen the Father*
 - ❖ John 14:10-11--*I am in the Father and the Father is in me?*
- Here in John 5:19-29, Jesus reveals how that works.

1. The Father wills, the Son accomplishes



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❖ John 5:19-20--*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.*

❖ John 5:30--*I can do nothing on my own.*

- There are two things that we can see in this...

(1) Jesus doesn't have free will.

- Some opponents of reformed theology argue, "it isn't love if it isn't my choice." For such people, this verse creates enormous problems because it is crystal clear that Jesus is absolutely unable to do anything of his own free will. The Father's will is simply irresistible to him. Thus, to these opponents of reformed theology we must ask, does this mean that Jesus's love isn't real? Of course not! Likewise, just because God grace in saving us is irresistible to us doesn't mean our love and gratitude towards him isn't real or genuine.

(2) Jesus is every bit as powerful as the Father

- We see in the text that the Father loves the Son and shows him everything that he is doing, things that will cause us to marvel. Yet, Jesus does all of these things. Thus, "the only one who could conceivably do whatever the Father does must be as great as the Father, as divine as the Father."³

2. Jesus has the same power over life and death as the Father

❖ John 5:21--*For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will.*

❖ John 5:24-26--*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.*

- There are two things we can see in this...

(1) Here Jesus is claiming to have the very power that God expressed in the Old Testament...

- ❖ Deuteronomy 32:39--*See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god beside me; I kill and I make alive;*
- The very Word of God that breathed life into dry bones in the book of Ezekiel (37:1-14) is the very Word in flesh (John 1:14), Jesus Christ. This is what we see here in these verses.

(2) Jesus is sovereign over salvation

- The Jews understood very well that they were the covenant people of God, not because they chose God, but because God had chosen them. It was a sovereign choice of God the Father (Deuteronomy 7:6-8). Now, Jesus is claiming to be every bit as sovereign over salvation. He will give "life to whom he will."

³ Ibid



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3. Jesus executes judgement according to the will of the Father

- ❖ John 5:22--*The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son,*
- ❖ John 5:27--*And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man.*
- ❖ John 5:30--*As I hear, I judge, and my judgment is just, because I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me.*
 - Is there anyone in all of creation just enough to have God grant to him the responsibility of judging the world? No, Gods alone possesses such justice. Thus, when Jesus says God the Father has “given all judgement to the Son” he is demonstrating that he is none other than the just Lord of the universe, God almighty. He is the Son of man spoken of in Daniel...
 - ❖ Daniel 7:13-14--*I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. 14 And 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 one that shall not be destroyed.*

4. Jesus is worthy of the same worship as the Father

- ❖ John 5:22-24--*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. 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.*
 - There two things to see in this...
 - (1) What is God the Father worthy of?
 - ❖ Deuteronomy 6:4-5--*Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. 5 You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might*
 - Here in John 5:22-23, Jesus is letting us know that he is indeed the one true God and that this greatest of all commandments is nothing less than a command to worship him.
 - (2) Jesus is the ONLY way to the Father.
 - When Jesus says, “Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him,” he makes it clear that we cannot honor the Father by worshipping Allah, Buddah, the Hindu gods, or any other deity of any other world religion. We cannot honor the Father by being a good person (because we aren’t anyway). We cannot honor the Father by obeying the law perfectly. The only possible way to honor the Father is to honor Jesus Christ the Son and worship him as God almighty!

5. Jesus is the Resurrection

- ❖ John 5:28-29--*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*



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- It is astonishing that Jesus begins this sentence with “Do not marvel at this” because he has said things that are truly marvelous. Nevertheless, the appearance of this phrase alerts us to the reality that Jesus is about to say the most marvelous thing yet. He is basically saying, “if you think that’s great, just wait until you see every person who has every lived and died rise from the dead by the power of my spoken Word. He is telling these people what he tells Martha a little later in his ministry...
- ♣ John 11:24-26--*Martha said to him, I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day. 25 Jesus said to her, I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, 26 and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die.*