

## 41. The Gospel of John—5:19

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### *“Jesus Declares His Divinity” Pt.3*

(8/26/18)

We are currently in chapter 5 in our study of John’s gospel—in a series we’ve entitled, *“Jesus Declares His Divinity.”*

Now, as we said last time, the discourse Jesus gives here starting with verse 17 and running thru the end of the chapter—was the result of the miracle He did as recorded in verses 1-15.

This follows a pattern established by Jesus thru out His earthly ministry—a miracle followed by a discourse, leading up to one of the seven “I AM” statements (declarations of divinity) that John chose to build his gospel around.

This is no inconsequential truth—our eternal destiny hangs in the balance when it comes to our understanding the divinity of Christ (John 8:24).

In John chapter 5 verses 17 thru 30—Jesus makes 5 claims to His own divinity, 5 claims to equality with the Father (God).

### **I. Jesus Claims Equality with God in His Person—v.17-18**

#### **John 5:16-18 (NKJV)**

<sup>16</sup> For this reason the Jews persecuted Jesus, and sought to kill Him, because He had done these things on the Sabbath.<sup>17</sup> **But Jesus answered them, “My Father has been working until now, and I have been working.”** <sup>18</sup> **Therefore the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, because He not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God.**

As we said last week, in Jewish culture a son was always considered to be equal with his father in personhood—not in authority but in essential humanity.

In fact, the Jewish mindset on the subject was that the son was an equal *extension* of his father.

Now, the Jews viewed themselves collectively as ‘sons of God’, so they did refer to God as “*our Father*”—but only in the sense of a Father Who gave them life creatively but not relationally.

But when Jesus (the only *begotten* Son of God) said, “**My Father**” instead of the usual “*our Father*,” used by the Jews—He was claiming a relationship with God that went beyond being a creation of God (Jesus is the Creator not part of the creation).

He was claiming equality with YHWH (the great I AM)—and that’s why the Jewish leaders accused Him of blasphemy.

You see, in their minds (and rightfully so) anyone claiming to be equal with God was also claiming to be God!

Or to put it another way—no one can be equal *with God* who is *not God*!

The phrase “**making himself equal with God**” employs a present perfect tense verb in the Greek, which means that—Jesus was *continually* making Himself equal with God.

In other words, this was no isolated incident—it was the hallmark of His ministry—

**John 10:31-33 (NKJV)**

<sup>31</sup> Then the Jews took up stones again to stone Him. <sup>32</sup> Jesus answered them, "Many good works I have shown you from My Father. For which of those works do you stone Me?" <sup>33</sup> The Jews

answered Him, saying, "For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy, and because You, being a Man, [constantly, continually] make Yourself God."

Regardless of what the Mormons, Jehovah Witnesses—or any other cult tells you "*Jesus wasn't God, He never claimed to be God*"—that is pure heresy.

The fact is, those who heard Jesus knew He was claiming to be God in human form, that's why they wanted to kill Him—for blasphemy.

Now this reminds us of what John said about Jesus Christ to open his gospel—

**John 1:1 (NKJV)**

<sup>1</sup> In the beginning was the Word, **and the Word was with God...**

The Greek literally says, "...*and the Word was toward God*".

The idea being presented is that, the Word (Jesus) was *toward* God (Father) in the sense of being "*face to face with; eye to eye with; on the same level with—or in other words, equal with God.*"

In other words, Jesus is not just a mighty god but something less than Almighty Jehovah God—He is and always has been equal with Almighty God.

And as we've already said—anyone who is equal with God has to be God!

**John 1:1 (NKJV)**

<sup>1</sup> In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, **and the Word was God.**

The Jehovah Witnesses challenge this by bringing up John 14:28—

**John 14:28 (NKJV)**

<sup>28</sup> You have heard Me say to you, 'I am going away and coming *back* to you.' If you loved Me, you would rejoice because I said, 'I am going to the Father,' for My Father is greater than I.

This they say proves that Jesus is a lesser god and not equal with Jehovah God.

But you see, when Jesus said, “*My Father is greater than I*”—He was speaking in terms of His earthly mission—

**Philippians 2:6-7 (NLT)**

<sup>6</sup> Though he [*Jesus*] was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to.

<sup>7</sup> Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being...

**Hebrews 2:9 (NKJV)**

<sup>9</sup> But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone.

And so, when Jesus said, “*My Father is greater than I*”, He was speaking in terms of *authority*—the authority of His Father that He had voluntarily placed Himself under to fulfill the mission of redemption the Father had sent Him to earth to accomplish.

The Lord Jesus was not saying that His Father in heaven was greater than Him in essence and Being—in that regard they are both equal because they are both God (part of the God-head).

**I. Jesus Claims Equality with God in His Person—v.17-18**

**II. Jesus Claims Equality with God in His Work—v.17, 19**

**John 5:17 (NKJV)**

<sup>17</sup> But Jesus answered them, "My Father has been working until now, and I have been working."...

So Jesus essentially told these religious leaders—“**Why do I work on the Sabbath?—Because My Father works on the Sabbath.**”

And the work that He and His Father are constantly doing 24 hours a day, 7 days a week—is the work of saving souls—the work of redemption!

God rested on that first Sabbath, not because He was *fatigued* but because—the work of creation was finished.

However, not long after God finished the original creation (physical universe)—man fell, and God began working on the new creation (work of redemption)—

**2 Corinthians 5:17 (NKJV)**

<sup>17</sup> Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

When we talk about the enormity of the original creation of the physical universe (12 to 18 billion light years in diameter) with its trillions of stars and planets and billions of galaxies—truly a spectacular thing to behold.

But look, as spectacular as the creation of the physical universe was, do you realize that only 31 verses in Genesis chapter one are devoted to the creation—and the rest of the Bible to redemption?

The Bible tells us that creation was the work of God's fingers—“*When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, The moon and the stars, which You have ordained...*” (Ps.8:3).

However, when it came to redemption, the Bible says He—“*bared His arms*” (rolled up His sleeves).

The work of redemption—or as Paul the apostle put it “the new creation” was far more involved and, from a human standpoint, far more difficult to accomplish than was the creation of the physical universe.

In the original creation of the physical universe all God had to do was *speak* and everything came into existence—but when it came to the redemption of our souls the Lord Jesus Christ (God in human form) had to *die*!

God's Word is very clear on this point—“... *without shedding of blood there is no remission [forgiveness of sin]*.” (Hebrews 9:22)

Under the Old Covenant God provided a sacrificial system whereby the blood of animals could be substituted for the guilty person to atone for (temporarily cover) their sins.

The one stipulation that God commanded with regard to the animal sacrifices offered to Him was that—they had to be without ‘spot’ or ‘blemish’—in other words ‘perfect’.

The redemption of a human soul involved a price that no human being could pay—

**Psalm 49:7-8 (NKJV)**

<sup>7</sup> None *of them* can by any means redeem *his* brother, Nor give to God a ransom for him-- <sup>8</sup> For the redemption of their souls *is* costly...

The redemption of a human soul is so costly that no amount of money can purchase it—it requires a blood payment—“*life for life*”—but innocent life for the guilty.

Of course, this all pointed to Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, Who was without spot or blemish (born sinless and never sinned during His entire life on earth)—and Whose precious blood removed the stain of our sins completely and forever—

**1 Peter 1:18-19 (NKJV)**

<sup>18</sup> knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, *like* silver or gold, from your aimless conduct *received* by tradition from your fathers, <sup>19</sup> but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.

**1 John 1:7 (NKJV)**

<sup>7</sup> ...and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

The only ransom God would accept for the redemption of fallen sinners was the blood of His Son—the innocent (sinless) dying for the guilty.

And so when Jesus said, **“My Father has been working (24/7) until now, and I have been working”**—you understand that the work He was referring to was the work of redemption.

And then He goes on to say in v.19—**“Most assuredly, I say to you...”**

The phrase **“most assuredly”** (“verily, verily”-KJV; “truly, truly”-NASB; “Very truly”-NIV) is Jesus’ way of saying—

*“Listen up and don’t miss this. What’s coming is very, very important—You must hear and accept what I’m about to say.”*

**John 5:19 (NKJV)**

**19 ...“Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do...”**

In this statement, Jesus is affirming His deity based on the mutual works He and His Father were doing.

In other words, no one can do the works that God does unless—that Person is God!

*“If Jesus is God then why can’t He do what He wants to do—why can He only do what the Father is doing?”*

One author said—

*“We must not think that when Jesus claimed to be able to do nothing, except what he saw the Father doing, he was saying that he was something like a robot, a zombie, who carried out the directives of the Father without thinking. This is not at all what he was saying.”*

When our Lord came to earth as man, He submitted Himself to the Father in everything—*“Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God” (Heb. 10:9).*

**Philippians 2:5-8 (NLT2)**

<sup>5</sup> You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had...He gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form, <sup>8</sup> he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross.

*“Well, what about all of those miracles He did?”*

Jesus only performed the works (miracles, healings) His father directed Him to do—and then not in His own power, but in the power of the Holy Spirit (the same power available to us to do the work of God).

In the wilderness, Satan tempted Him to use His divine powers for Himself; but He refused to act independently. He was totally dependent on the Father and the power of the Holy Spirit of God.

Arthur W. Pink helps to clarify this—

*“It will be seen that in verse 30 we have a strictly parallel statement, and by noting what is added there the one in verse 19 is more easily understood. “The Son can do nothing of himself” of verse 19 is repeated in the “I can do nothing of myself” in verse 30, and then in the closing words of verse 30 we find that the Lord explains His meaning by giving as a reason—“Because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me.” The limitation is not because of any defect in His person (brought about by the incarnation) nor because of any limitation in His power (voluntary or imposed); it was solely a matter of will. “The Son can do nothing of himself,” literally, “nothing out of himself,” that is, “nothing” as proceeding from or originating with Himself. In other words, the force of what He said was this: ‘I cannot act independently of the Father.’*

The Son was so vitally connected with God the Father that He could not act independently.

He does not mean that He did not have the power to do anything by Himself—but that He was so closely united with God that He would only do the very things which He saw His **Father** doing.

**John 5:19 (NKJV)**

<sup>19</sup> Then Jesus answered and said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; **for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner.**



Again, a statement of divinity—no one can do what God does unless they themselves are God!

As we have already said, the work the Father and Son were primarily doing was the work of saving souls—the work of redemption (new creation).

When Jesus worked on the Sabbath (or any other day) healing people—it was the work of redemption by showing them that Messiah, the Son of God, was with them and using His miraculous works to prove His divinity and save them—if they would receive Him by faith.

The work of saving lost people was rooted in God’s love for this fallen world—

**John 3:16 (NKJV)**

<sup>16</sup> For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

A couple of years ago, Sandy Adams, who is a Calvary Pastor from Stone Mountain Georgia, made this statement at a pastor’s conference I was attending—he said, “*Love flows down.*”

And by that he meant that our kids will never love us as much as we love them—and we will never love God as much as He loves us.

**Romans 5:8 (NKJV)**

<sup>8</sup> But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

**1 John 4:9-10, 19 (NKJV)**

<sup>9</sup> In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. <sup>10</sup> In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins...<sup>19</sup> We love Him because He first loved us. (Love flows down)

Often, we feel guilty in our spirit that we don’t love God enough—and so, we purpose that we’re going to love God more.

And while that's a noble goal—it is none-the-less a work of the flesh because we're focusing on *our* love for God, on how much *we* love God, on what *we're* going to do to love God more.

Rather, the biblical principle is that we focus on God's love for us—not on our love for God.

I have learned so much about God's love for me thru my children and now my grandchildren.

I see my granddaughter Aria almost every day.

And it never fails, no matter how bad a day I've had when she comes overs it always brings me great joy to spend time with her.

I'm convinced that she will never love me as much as I love her—in fact she has no idea the depth of my love for her.

One day after spending time with her and the joy it brought me, as she was leaving with her mom and dad—I was suddenly overwhelmed with how much I love her.

And at that moment, the Lord spoke to me and said, “*That's how I feel when you spend time with Me.*”

I remember many years ago when we only had Phil and he was about 2 years old—that I came home one night after church. He was asleep, and I went into his room and sat on his bed...

As we study John's gospel—it's so easy to miss the 'forest for the trees.' (Explain)