

THE CLAIMS OF THE CHRIST

John 5:19-29

*He will not be disheartened or crushed,
Until He has established justice in the earth;
And the coastlands will wait expectantly for His law. (Isaiah 42:4).*

It is a simple and uncontested fact that no single man has ever changed the face of the world so much as the Galilean Carpenter we know as Jesus of Nazareth. Napoleon Bonaparte was once heard to say, “I know men; and I tell you that Jesus Christ is no mere man. Between Him and every other person in the world there is no possible term of comparison. Alexander, Caesar, Charlemagne, and myself have found empires; but upon what do these creations of our genius depend? Upon force. Jesus alone founded His empire upon love; and to this day millions would die for Him.”

There have been religious leaders who have influenced the world and who have preached on how men ought to live. Jesus is unique in that He preached Himself. He said...

- I am the vine.
- I am the light.
- I am the way.
- I am the bread of life.
- I am the Messiah.
- I an the Father are One.

No other great teacher in history has ever made such claims as Jesus made for Himself. This means you can never get away with saying that Jesus was merely a good man. He refused to be called that. He said that only God is good. That means either Jesus is either God or else He is not truly good. There are no other options. You must either fall down at His feet and worship Him, or else you must reject Him altogether.

Who was Jesus? What did He say about Himself? In this chapter, we are introduced to some of His claims.

JESUS THE SUBMISSIVE SON

19 Jesus therefore 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 like manner. 20 For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him

all things that He Himself is doing; and greater works than these will He show Him, that you may marvel.” (John 5:19-20).

Everything that Jesus says in this discourse comes as a direct result of a confrontation that took place in the first part of this chapter. Jesus had performed a miracle on the Sabbath day. If this were not bad enough in the eyes of the Jews, Jesus also told the healed man to take up his pallet and to go home. This was an affront to the Jews as they took it to be a clear violation of the Sabbath.

When they charged Jesus with the breaking of the Sabbath, His response was to reply that the reason He works on the Sabbath is because His Father also works on the Sabbath. The Jews did not miss the implications of this statement. They realized Jesus was claiming equality with God.

If Jesus had not been equal with God, this would have been a perfect time for Him to issue a disclaimer: “Hold it men, you did not understand Me. I did not mean to imply that I was really equal with God.” He did not do this. He did not issue a disclaimer. He did not back down from His claim. Instead, He now moves to underline and to emphasize that claim.

1. The Submission of Dependence: *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 like manner (5:19).*

The underlying principle of this passage is introduced in the first verse. It is the principle that the Son does not operate independently of the Father. He only does those things that the Father shows for Him to do.

This means that if the Jews are going to accuse Him of breaking the Sabbath, then they are going to have to accuse God, too. They have accused Jesus of setting Himself up against God, but He has shown them that they are the ones who have set themselves up against God.

2. The Submission of Understanding: *For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself is doing (5:20).*

The reason it can be demonstrated that the Son is doing the right thing is because it is the Father who has shown Him all things.

It is noteworthy that the word used here for “love” is the Greek word φιλεω. It is the type of love that is based upon a relationship. That is the kind of love the Father has for the Son. They enjoy a relationship that goes back for all eternity.

3. The Result of Submission: *Greater works than these will He show Him, that you may marvel (5:20).*

The Jews had been amazed that Jesus had been able to heal a lame man and cause Him to walk. Jesus says in effect, “You haven’t seen anything yet. The best is yet to come.”

The result of the submission the Son shows to the Father is that the Son will show “greater works.” What are these greater works? They will be described later in this same passage. Instead of merely causing a lame man to stand, Jesus will one day cause the dead to rise up out of their graves.

Notice how this principles underscores the upside down quality of the kingdom. The result of submission is exaltation. This is the way of the kingdom. The way up is down. The way to exaltation is humility. The way to kingship is through servanthood. The way to power is to serve. The way to being spiritually rich is to recognize your spiritual poverty. The way to happiness is not to seek your own happiness, but to seek the happiness of others. The way to find your life is to lose your life.

JESUS THE HONORED SON

²¹ “For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son also gives life to whom He wishes. ²² For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son, ²³ in order that all may honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him.” (John 5:21-22).

Having shown that He has taken a posture of submission to His Heavenly Father, Jesus now goes on to show that the result of this submission will be a result of honor. Jesus is to be given honor because...

1. The Life of the Father is accorded to the Son: *For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son also gives life to whom He wishes (5:21).*

God is sovereign in matters of life and death. He and only He has the power to give life. The Jews understood this principle. Their own Scriptures taught them that God is the dispenser of life and death.

See now that I, I am He, And there is no god besides Me; It is I who put to death and give life. I have wounded, and it is I who heal; And there is no one who can deliver from My hand.

(Deuteronomy 32:39).

The Bible teaches that it is God who is able to put to death and to give life. Jesus says that, just as the Father has complete sovereignty over life and death, so also Jesus has that same sovereignty.

2. The judgment of the Father is accorded to the Son: *For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son, ²³ in order that all may honor the Son (5:22-23).*

Jesus claims to be the equal of the Father in the area of judgment. He tells us that it is not the Father who judges, but that this judgment is accorded to the Son. There is coming a day when all men shall stand before the seat of judgment. When they look to the One who sits upon that seat, it will be the One whose hands are nail scarred and whose side bears the mark of a Roman spear.

It has been said that there are two kinds of lawyers: Those who know the law and those who know the judge. Make sure that when the day comes, you know the Judge.

3. Honor to the Father is accorded to the Son: *He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him (5:22).*

You cannot believe in the Father and love the Father and honor the Father without also believing in and loving and honoring the Son.

Every once in a while I speak to someone who tells me that they love God and hold to Christian principles, but that they want nothing to do with Jesus. This simply is not possible. Take Jesus away from Christianity and there is no Christianity. He did not come preaching a way to God; He came preaching that He IS the way to God. He preached Himself.

Notice the “all’s” in this passage: *He has given ALL judgment to the Son, ²³ in order that ALL may honor the Son (5:22-23).* There is coming a day when ALL the world will honor the Son. On that day, every knee shall bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. On that day, you will honor the Son willingly, or you will honor Him unwillingly, but you will honor Him.

JESUS THE BRINGER OF LIFE

²⁴ “Truly, truly, I say to you, he 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. 25 Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear shall live.” (John 5:24-25).

We saw in verse 21 that *the Son... gives life to whom He wishes*. Now we read that this life is given to all who hear and believe. That is the entire purpose John has in writing this book. It is so that you will hear and believe and that you will enter into this life. Notice also that this life is not limited to the future; it is described here as a present reality: *He who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, **has** eternal life (5:24).*

Jesus is speaking of a reality that was present in His day as it is present today. There were people in that day and there are people today who are passing from death into life.

Verse 25 particularly underscores the present aspect of this eternal life: *Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming AND NOW IS, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear shall live.”*

This is not speaking of a physical resurrection. The Bible does teach of a physical resurrection, but this is not it. This is speaking of a spiritual resurrection. It is only those who partake of the spiritual resurrection who will one day benefit from the physical resurrection.

The First Resurrection	The Second Resurrection
Takes place when you come to Christ in faith	Takes place when Christ returns at His Second Coming
A resurrection of the spirit	A resurrection of the body
<i>An hour is coming AND NOW IS, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear shall live (5:25).</i>	<i>An hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs shall hear His voice, 29 and shall come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment (5:28-29).</i>
<i>Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power (Revelation 20:6).</i>	<i>And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds (Revelation 20:13).</i>

Here is a wonderful truth. If you are a believer in Jesus Christ, then you have partaken in a resurrection. Just as Jesus rose from the dead, so you have risen to a new life. Because

of that, you are called to live differently.

If then you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. ³ For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. (Colossians 3:1-3).

You have been granted a new life that is to be lived on a higher plane. You are now living with an eternal perspective; with a heavenly perspective.

Imagine for a moment what would happen if God were to come to you and to tell you that you would be able to write out the agenda and course of your entire life. You would likely jump at the chance. There is only one problem. Which “you” would write out this agenda? Would it be the person you were at the age of 10? How about the person you were at the age of 15? Or the age of 20? Or the age of 25? No, you would probably want to person you are today to be the one to write it out. Why? Because today you have the benefit of a greater perspective on life than what you had at an earlier age. But what gives you the idea that your perspective of today is sufficient when compared to the perspective of eternity? It is only when you see life from a heavenly perspective that you can have a true and complete perspective on your life.

JESUS THE AUTHORITATIVE JUDGE

²⁶ “For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself; ²⁷ and He gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man. ²⁸ Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs shall hear His voice, ²⁹ and shall come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment.” (John 5:26-29).

Jesus has already stated in verse 22 the principle that all judgment has been given to Him. This idea of judgment did not take the Jews by surprise. It was a part of their theology. They believed that God was going to bring forth judgment upon the world. What did surprise them was that this judgment would be given to Jesus. He is the authoritative judge because...

1. He Has Life in Himself: *For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself (5:26).*

If judgment is a matter of life and death, then it follows that the One who has been given judgment is the one who has the ability in Himself to confer life and death.

Yet this passage does not say that Jesus has life and death in Himself. The focus here is upon life. He has life in Himself. This is the focus because we are already under the sentence of death. Someone asked the question, "What do I have to do to go to hell?" The answer is NOTHING. If you are an unbeliever, then you are already dead in your trespasses and sins and walking according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. You are already by nature a child of wrath.

When you come to the Son, you find that He has life. He is the source of life. That life is to be found *in Himself*. It is only as you are in Christ that you also enter into that source of life.

2. He is the Son of Man: *He gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man (5:27).*

Another reason that Jesus has authority to judge mankind is because He is a man. This is not a denial of the trinity. Jesus is both fully God and fully man. Because He is a man, He is qualified to be the judge of man.

We can also say that the reason Jesus has authority to judge mankind is because He was judged in the place of mankind. He took the judgment that was justly due to mankind and he took it on Himself and suffered its penalty. When you come to Jesus, you come to One who is both Judge and Judged.

3. He will Raise the Dead: *An hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs shall hear His voice, ²⁹ and shall come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment (5:28-29).*

There is a curious teaching that has been going around churches for the past hundred years that says there will be several future resurrections and judgments. The teaching is known as Dispensationalism. It says that there will first be a secret resurrection of believers followed by a period of earthly tribulation to be followed by another resurrection of believers followed by an earthly millennium after which there will be still another resurrection.

Jesus makes no mention of such a prophetic scheme. He describes instead the resurrection of the saved and the resurrection of the unsaved as that which takes place in "an hour."

There is coming a day when the graves will be open and when all men will stand before their Creator. What is the basis for this judgment? It will be the nature of your deeds. Those who did good deeds will have a resurrection of life. Those who

did evil deeds will find themselves in a resurrection of judgment.

“Wait a minute!” you protest. “I know that the Bible teaches man is saved through faith and apart from the works of the Law.”

That is true. Your salvation is a gift of God. You cannot earn it or deserve it. But you also have God’s guarantee that the gift of salvation will always bring about good works. Those good works are the evidence that you possess the gift. In the day of judgment, it will be on the basis of that outward evidence that you will be seen to possess that salvation.

Jesus saves you just the way you are. But He does not leave you the way you are. He begins a change in you that transforms you into the person He has called you to be.

Your deeds are an index to your heart. They do not dictate what your heart will do; it is the other way around. They show what is in the heart.

Fruit does not give a tree life, but one of the ways you can tell that a tree is alive is because it is producing fruit. What is true of trees is also true of people. God looks for fruit in the lives of His people. For what kind of fruit does He look? He looks for the fruit of His own Spirit. He looks for love and for joy and for peace and for patience and for gentleness and for self control. That is not to say that you will achieve perfection in this life. But it does you good to ask whether you are more loving than you used to be. Is your heart more full of the joy of the Lord? Are you experiencing an abiding peace? Are you becoming more patient? Is your life characterized by self control? Is your laugh deeper? Are your concerns broader? You are not saved by your deeds, but you are revealed by your deeds.

Are you saved? Are you one of God’s people? Do you know for certain that you possess the gift of eternal life? Does your life give evidence of the reality of your faith? If it does not, then I am not telling you to go out and to do more good works. I am telling you instead to go to the cross and repent and believe so that the Lord might save you and regenerate you and then produce those good works in you.