

Virtual Worship Service for Kelham Baptist, Sunday Morning, April 5, 2020

Text: John 5:19-23, "Who Is Jesus? God"

Call to Worship: "Majesty"

<https://youtu.be/1uWSpNawXIY>

Song: "Crown Him with Many Crowns"

<https://youtu.be/4vbCtxbpRIM>

Song: "All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name"

<https://youtu.be/5WVSyGBBfi8>

Years ago when we lived in Ohio, there was a cult nearby, The Way International, one of whose hallmark beliefs was that Jesus is not God. One of the founder's books was even titled *Jesus Is Not God*. The founder of the cult asserted Jesus was "the Son of God" but not "God the Son," using linguistic gobbledygook to assert the God the Father created Jesus at His conception rather than His being eternal, as John 1:1 says: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Jehovah's Witnesses and the Worldwide Church of God (Herbert W. Armstrong) also adopt the view that Jesus is not God, often twisting Scriptures to support their heresy. Along with those, from time to time you may encounter liberals and unbelievers who say something like "Jesus never claimed to be God." While Jesus never said the words "I am God," He asserted His identity and Deity in other ways that are, I believe, even more clear and powerful. In John 5, we encounter one of those passages.

“What does it matter?” we may ask. Simply this: It makes all the difference in the world. John stated his purpose in writing the gospel in John 20:30-31: “Many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.” John repeated that truth in different words in 1 John 5:13: “These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.” Reading those two statements, you can see why cultists will openly refer to Jesus as “the Son of God,” claiming that does not mean He is God the Son. It is a logical and spiritual sleight of hand to deceive immature believers. In John 5, we will see that both terms imply the same reality: Jesus is God.

If Jesus is not God, He cannot be the Sacrifice that covers sin. Psalm 49:7 says, “None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him.” No mere man can pay the price of redemption. Verse 15 of that psalm then says, “God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave.” Paul echoed this truth in 1 Timothy 2:5-6: “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all.” Only if Jesus is the God-Man, fully God, yet fully Man, can He be sufficient as Mediator. If we reject the reality that Jesus is God, salvation is not possible.

As we pick up our study in John 5, Jesus has just healed a man by the Pool of Bethesda. The man had a bed with him, and Jesus spoke and said, “Rise, take up thy

bed, and walk” (vs. 8). Immediately the man was healed and picked up his bed and left the Pool of Bethesda. Somewhere along his journey (going home or to the temple, where Jesus found him), the Jewish Sabbath watchers saw the egregious violation of Sabbath law—this man was carrying a burden on the Sabbath! That was work! That they did not recognize this man who had been unable to walk for thirty-eight years and was likely a common sight in Jerusalem is astounding. Perhaps they did not recognize him, now upright, when they had always seen him reclining. In any case, they were more concerned with the fact that he was carrying something on the Sabbath than that he had been healed. That is eternally sad.

The first whole book of the compiled Jewish oral traditions (*The Mishnah*) was spent defining what was work on the Sabbath. The first chapter (out of twenty-four) was on *Carrying*. There was no doubt in any mind that this man violated the law by carrying a burden in Jerusalem on the Sabbath. Jeremiah addressed this issue prior to the Captivity: “Thus saith the LORD; Take heed to yourselves, and bear no burden on the sabbath day, nor bring *it* in by the gates of Jerusalem; neither carry forth a burden out of your houses on the sabbath day, neither do ye any work, but hallow ye the sabbath day, as I commanded your fathers” (Jer. 17:21-22).

Nehemiah was faced with the same issue after the return from the Captivity: “And it came to pass, that when the gates of Jerusalem began to be dark before the sabbath, I commanded that the gates should be shut, and charged that they should not be opened till after the sabbath: and *some* of my servants set I at the gates, *that* there should no burden be brought in on the sabbath day” (13:19). Nehemiah was

dealing with merchants who brought their goods into the city to sell on the Sabbath, likely the same disrespect to God that Jeremiah saw. That was not this man's problem. He had been healed by the Lord of the Sabbath (Matt. 12:8) and was just trying to walk home—for the first time in thirty-eight years. (Imagine that experience—the whole world looks different when you're walking.)

When the man found out who had healed him (John tells us "he wist not who it was" (John 5:13), he immediately went to the authorities to tell them "that it was Jesus, which had made him whole" (vs. 15), not focusing on the law-breaking of which he was accused but on the healing he had experienced.

That forms the backdrop for the confrontation with Jesus ("therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay him, because he had done these things on the sabbath day, John 5:16). "He had done these things" indicates this was not the only thing Jesus had done.

Jesus "answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work" (John 5:17). "Answered" carries the idea of answering a legal charge. Moulton-Milligan's *Vocabulary of the New Testament* (p. 64), noted that the form of this verb in the commercial documents of the First Century "are without exception legal reports." The Jews charged Jesus, and He responded to the charges. His response further inflamed their hatred: "therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God" (vs. 18). The Jews of Jesus' day clearly understood what Jesus meant, even though modern cultists and liberals do not understand. Jesus had

asserted equality with God. The Greek is specific, as *Young's Literal Translation* indicates: "He also called God his own Father." "His own" translates the Greek word ἰδιος, a word meaning "private," "belonging to one's self."

Jesus continued with one of the "verily, verily, I say unto you" (John 5:19) statements John so often recorded (twenty-five times in the Gospel—1:51; 3:3, 5, 11; 5:19, 24-25; 6:26, 32, 47, 53; 8:34, 51, 58; 10:1, 7; 12:24; 13:16, 20-21, 38; 14:12; 16:20, 23; 21:18). "Verily" is a transliteration of the Hebrew word אָמֵן, or as we know it, "Amen," signifying assent, confirmation, or agreement. It was the response in the synagogue at the end of prayer. Jesus' doubling of the word and prefacing His statement by this intensified its force. Morris wrote, "In the Gospels, it is only used by Jesus, and always as a prefix to significant statements.... It marks these words as uttered before God, who is thus invited to bring them to pass" (*The Gospel According to John*, p. 169). George Ladd said, "Jesus used the expression as the equivalent of an oath, paralleling the Old Testament expression, 'As I live, saith the Lord'" (*Jesus and the Kingdom*, p. 163).

Putting all these together, whenever we see "verily, verily" (John 5:19), we must prepare ourselves for something equivalent to "thus saith the Lord." John organized his gospel by the direction of the Holy Spirit around *signs* and *discourses*, focusing on individuals.

The signs are:

1. Changing the Water into Wine (2:1-11)
2. Healing of the Nobleman's Son (4:46-54)
3. Healing at the Pool of Bethesda (5:1-9)

4. Feeding the Multitude (6:1-14)
5. Walking on the Water (6:15-25)
6. Healing the Man Born Blind (9:1-8)
7. Raising Lazarus from the Dead (11:1-46)

The discourses are:

1. The New Birth (3:1-36)
2. The Water of Life (4:1-42)
3. The Divine Son (5:19-47)
4. The Bread of Life (6:22-66)
5. The Life-Giving Spirit (7:1-52)
6. The Light of the World (8:12-59)
7. The Good Shepherd (10:1-42)

Jesus' third discourse follows His third sign and draws specific attention to His identity as God's Son. J. C. Ryle wrote, "Nowhere else in the Gospels do we find our Lord making such a formal, systematic, orderly, regular statement of His own unity with the Father, His divine commission and authority, and the proofs of His Messiahship as we find in this discourse... To me it seems one of the deepest things of the Bible." While this third discourse contains no "I am" statements (except perhaps verse 43: "I am come in my Father's name," which is different from "I am the door," 10:7, 9), careful study shows some of the most profound statements about who Jesus is and what His relationship to the Father is.

The first statement Jesus made to the Jews in answer to the charges that He had violated the Sabbath and made Himself "equal with God" (John 5:18), boldly claimed "The Son," drawing from His claim to God as His particular Father, "can do nothing of himself" (vs. 19). This was not a statement in any way diminishing His identity or His Deity. Jesus was plainly presenting His submission in all things to the Father. Paul had this in mind in Philippians 2:8: "he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death." Jesus could "do nothing of himself" (John 5:19) because of His intention

to please the Father. Hebrews 10:9, paraphrasing Psalm 40:8, presents this same truth: "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God." This theme echoes through the New Testament. In John 10:18, Jesus presented the ultimate obedience only hinted at in chapter 5. Speaking of His life, Jesus said, "No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father." In the Garden of Gethsemane, we see its ultimate commitment in Jesus' prayer: "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done" (Luke 22:42).

"The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise" (John 5:19) admits the charge that He made Himself "equal with the Father" (vs. 18) and defended His equality with Him, as A.T. Robertson noted. Jesus repeatedly stressed the intimate relationship He had with the Father (5:30; 7:28; 8:28; 14:10). "The words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works" (14:10). "But what" (5:19) translates a negative possible condition: "Unless He sees the Father doing." Gill made the point that Jesus was not merely asserting repeating a work after He saw the Father do that work but that "as privy to the whole plan of his works, and saw in his nature and infinite mind, and in his vast counsels, purposes, and designs, all that he was doing, or would do, and so did the same, or acted agreeably to them; and which still shows and proves their unity of nature, and perfect equality, since there was nothing in the Father's mind but was known to the Son, seen, and observed, and acted up to by him." Jesus and the Father are One is what He claimed.

Jesus went on to explain: “For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth” (John 5:20). Nothing the Father does is hidden from Jesus. Here we have an unusual statement—that Father and the Son share common values, interests, and purposes (but far more). Most Christians have been educated about the difference between *agape* love and *phileo*-love—that the first is “God love,” while the second is human love. This is an over-simplification. John 21 seems to make a distinction—Peter used *phileo* all three times Jesus questioned him, “Lovest thou me” (vss. 16, 17), while Jesus used *agapeo* the first two times but *phileo* the third time, which some see as Jesus lowering His expectations to Peter. John 3:19 says “men loved darkness rather than light.” The word for “loved” there is *agapeo*. Here in John 5:20 we find *phileo*—the Father loves (present tense, continuously) the Son. John 3:35 says, “The Father loveth the Son,” and there the verb is *agapeo*. It is also present tense, indicating continuous action. Here in 5:20 the word is *phileo*. John used both words to describe the Father’s love for the Son. In John 16:27, to the disciples, Jesus said, “The Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God.” There the word is this same word, *phileo*. C. S. Lewis in his book *The Four Loves* made a helpful distinction between *agape* and *phileo*. *Agape* is love that exists despite changing circumstances. *Phileo* is love between people who share common values, interests, and activities. The Father has ongoing unconditional love for the Son (*agapeo*) and the Father loves (*phileo*) the Son because Father and Son have the same mind, purpose, and will. In John 5:20, Jesus asserted that He and the Father share the same mind. If Jesus were not God, this would be blasphemy of the highest order. But Jesus is God. That was His point.

Yet Jesus went further with His assertion of equality with God: “He will shew him greater works than these, that ye may marvel” (5:20). Jesus was speaking of raising the dead, which He mentions in the next verse. Note, however, “that ye may marvel.” This is another unusual statement. Nowhere else does Jesus say He will do something so that the Jews would “marvel.” The word means to wonder, to have in admiration. It is twice used by Luke in Acts and translated “wonder” (3:10; 13:41). John used it in Revelation 17:8 of the response of people on earth when the beast would rise from the bottomless pit “and go into perdition: and they that dwell on earth shall wonder.” The healing of the man at the Pool of Bethesda would be as nothing compared to what Jesus would do, raise the dead.

Who is Jesus? He is God. He is the Redeemer. He is the Lord. He’s Lord of life and He’s Lord of death. David said in Psalm 31:15: “My times *are* in thy hand.” As we face days of uncertainty and fear stalking the land, remember whose you are. Remember who is Lord.

Tonight I want us to explore more of what Jesus’ obedience means for us in a very practical way. Next Sunday, Easter, we do not know what will happen or how we will worship. We do know, however, that Jesus is still Lord.

Closing Song: “Jesus Is Lord of All”

<https://youtu.be/V IXE2EPNVA>