JESUS’ AMAZING CLAIM, PART 2

Let me begin by setting the scene for our lesson today – who is Jesus talking to from verse 19 to the end of Chapter 5? To the Pharisees, the “Jews” as John calls them, the Jewish religious leaders. It’s clear from verse 18 that they hate Jesus. In fact it says that they want to kill Him! Why? Two reasons, v 18: (A) For allegedly breaking the Sabbath, and (B) because He was claiming to be equal with God (Jesus is claiming, in essence, to be God). To the Jews this was blasphemy. So, given their hostility toward Him, how does Jesus respond? We looked at the first part of His response last week, verses 19 thru 24.

It’s important to note that Jesus never backtracks from His claim to be equal with God. In fact He reinforces this claim in His response to the Jews. First, He claims equality with God in His very nature. He refers to God as “My Father” (v 17) and to Himself as “the Son” (v 19). Second, Jesus claims equality with God in His works. “For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise (v 19). Third, He claims equality with God in power. “For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom He will” (v 21). As we are going to see in our passage today Jesus is referring to both a spiritual and physical resurrection from the dead. Fourth, He claims equality with God in authority. “The Father… has given all judgment to the Son” (v 22). Fifth, He claims equality with God in honor. “That all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father” (v 22). And finally, Jesus claims equality with God in truth. Jesus’ words are God’s words. “Whoever hears My word and believes Him who sent Me has eternal life” (v 24). Believing in His words leads to life.

So clearly as you read verse 18, the Jews got it. They understood correctly that Jesus was claiming to be equal with God, to BE God. And Jesus never once refutes that! Jesus in John 5 in effect draws a line in the sand. On one side is Jesus’ claim to be the Son of God, the Messiah, King of Israel, equal with God. To stand on that side is to believe what Jesus said and then, like His disciples, follow Him. On the other side of the line is the position the Jews took in John 5:18 and throughout the Gospels. They did not believe Jesus’ claim. They thought that He was either delusional, demon-possessed, crazy or a blasphemer who was misleading the people. Please understand this – there is NO option that allows for Jesus to be merely a good moral teacher. There is no straddling the line on this issue about who Jesus is. Either you stand on the side that believes Jesus is the Son of God as He claimed or you are on the side that believes Jesus was just a man, but not God. If you don’t believe Jesus’ claim then you reject Him.

So with that, let’s continue beginning at John 5 verse 25…

READ John 5:25-29

Some things are present, they now are, while some things are yet future. “An hour is coming” means at some point in time… “Is now here” means a present reality. What is the present reality? “The dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live.” Jesus is talking about spiritual rebirth. Jesus calls sinners to repentance. He invites us to be saved, to believe in His name. “Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Acts 2:21). “Even when we were dead in our trespasses, [God] made us alive together with Christ – by grace you have been saved thru faith” (Eph 2:5). We were spiritually dead, we heard the Gospel message, we believed it by faith and then, by His grace we were saved. This is spiritual resurrection. And this is what verses 25-27 refer to.

But then you have a shift. V 28 “Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming… (still future, hasn’t happened yet) when, V 29, dead people will hear His voice and come out! According to what Jesus says here, “all who are in the tombs will hear his voice.” Everyone who has ever lived and died on this earth will one day experience a physical (bodily) resurrection. Not just the redeemed, but everyone.

So, when will this event happen? We don’t know for sure. God has not revealed that to us. Does the Bible mention this physical resurrection of the dead anywhere else? 1 Thess 4:15-17; 1 Cor 15:52; Rev 20:4-5, 11-15

Eternity is a place for resurrected bodies – either to a resurrection of life (the saints of God, those who believe in Jesus Christ, the redeemed, “those who have done good”) or to a resurrection of judgment (all others, those who do not believe, those who rejected Christ, “those who have done evil”).

Who is the Giver of life? Whose voice will raise the dead? Jesus, the Son of God (v 25) He is the Giver of life both spiritually and physically.

Who is the Judge? Who determines everyone’s eternal destination? Jesus, the Son of Man (v 27) Read Matthew Chaps 24-25! It talks about the coming of the Son of Man and the final judgment. It’s a scary passage. All the nations of the earth are gathered together and Jesus is pictured as a shepherd separating the sheep from the goats. He says to the sheep (believers), “Come, inherit the kingdom prepared for you.” He says to the goats (unbelievers), “Depart from Me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.”

READ John 5:30

Jesus summarizes what He has already said in verses 17 thru 29. The bottom line is this – He does not operate independently of God, His Father. He only does the will of the Father. In V 30 Jesus shifts from speaking about Himself in the third person (“the Son,” “Son of Man,” “Son of God”) to the first person (“I,” “Myself,” “Me,” “My”).

READ John 5:31

Did Jesus alone bear witness of who He was? Did He alone claim that He (Jesus) was God? No, in our study of John there have been other witnesses who testified as to who they believed Jesus was. So you have all the testimonies of various people plus the testimony of Jesus Himself.

But Jesus knew what the Pharisees were thinking. Even though there is no recorded dialog during Jesus’ 30-verse response here in John Chapter 5 later in Chapter 8 they tell Jesus, “You are bearing witness of Yourself. Your witness is not true” (John 8:13) Jesus responds to them by saying, “Even if I bear witness of Myself (assuming that what the Pharisees said was true), My witness IS true.” So back to John 5:31. What Jesus is saying here, is basically this: “Let’s assume for the sake of argument that what think is true, that I alone am bearing witness of Myself and that, therefore, what I am saying cannot be true…” Jesus is acquiescing to their position. He’s doing that because He’s about to refute it. You see, in their way of thinking, Jesus alone was claiming to be God. Of course they discounted the testimony of all those poor misguided followers of Jesus. And their position was not without some validity. After all in the law, in Deuteronomy, you had to have 2 or 3 witnesses to convict someone of a crime, to prove your case against them. So you needed some evidence, more than just the testimony of one person. “So, Jesus, since You’re the only one claiming that You’re God we have decided that you are a liar and a blasphemer. We don’t believe you!”

Here’s how Jesus responds – and this is the crux of the rest of Chapter 5 – THERE IS ANOTHER WITNESS! Oh, and by the way this witness is someone that You cannot argue with. He’s a very reputable Witness. So, Who is this Witness? GOD Himself!

So, timeout! How does God speaks to us? How does God reveal Himself to human beings? What are some ways? Well, sometimes He speaks in an audible voice (Jesus’ baptism, on the Mt of Transfiguration). But that’s rare and there weren’t a whole lot of witnesses around. Sometimes He speaks thru His Holy Spirit. Sometimes thru dreams and visions. Sometimes thru angelic messengers. Sometimes thru His divinely appointed and inspired human messengers (prophets, rabbis, apostles). Sometimes thru signs and wonders, thru great miracles. Sometimes thru Scripture (O.T. writings – the Law and the Prophets). These are all methods that God uses to speak to people. Right?

What Jesus is going to do in the rest of John Chapter 5 is to present the testimony of God Himself about Jesus that was given thru several of these methods.

READ John 5:32-36a

The first testimony that God gives concerning who Jesus is came thru the message He gave John the Baptist. The Jewish nation including its religious leaders recognized John the Baptist as being a prophet of God. They saw John the same way that John’s father Zacharias saw him. In Luke 1:76, Zacharias proclaimed that his son John would be “the prophet of the Most High” who would “give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins.” Jesus tells the Jews here in our passage, “You sent to John” (v 33), “you guys sent people out to the desert to hear John’s message. You believed he was a prophet of God. You even took the time to go out and visit him yourselves.” V 35, “You were willing to rejoice for a while in his light.” The Jews recognized that John the Baptist was a messenger of God, the forerunner of the Messiah prophesied about in the O.T. and they had at one point been excited about John’s message. What was John’s message? “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!” The Messiah is coming, get ready, prepare the way of the Lord!”

V 35, Jesus refers to John as “a burning and shining lamp.” Later in John 8:12 Jesus will call Himself “the light of the world.” So John wasn’t the light but he held up, he shone forth the light – and that light was Jesus. John the Baptist’s message was concerning Jesus and it was given to Him by God. “Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.” So Jesus points to John the Baptist’s message as the very testimony of God Himself. But the Jews rejected their own prophet’s message!

Jesus then says that there is an even greater testimony than the one from John the Baptist – READ John 5:36

Jesus now points to His own works, the signs and miracles that He was doing in their very midst as a testimony from God. Even one of their own, a Pharisee named Nicodemus, recognized Jesus’ works as evidence of who He was. In John Chapter 3 Nicodemus told Jesus, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him." Nicodemus saw Jesus signs as evidence that Jesus was from God, but the Jews rejected Jesus’ signs and miracles. They dismissed them as the works of the devil. How many miracles did Jesus perform in His 3 ½ - year ministry? We don’t know but it was a whole lot. The very last verse of the Gospel of John says, “There were also many other things that Jesus did (other than what he recorded). Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.” An incredible statement. So the works of Jesus were the clear testimony of God.

But the ultimate testimony from God about Jesus comes in the scriptures, God’s holy word. And that’s where Jesus goes next, v 37-47. And we’ll pick it up there next week.

Jesus tells the Jewish leaders, “You heard John the Baptist, your own prophet and didn’t believe him. You are witnesses to the many miracles that I am doing and still don’t believe Me. And now you search the Scriptures, which are all about Me and you don’t believe them.”

The bottom line, v 40 – “You refuse to come to Me that you may have life.” It is a willful choice. Despite all the overwhelming evidence you choose to walk away and reject Me.

Application – so which side of the line are you on? If you’re standing on the side of the line that believes what Jesus said about Himself you need to proclaim it. So let’s do that. Sing “O For a Thousand Tongues…”