Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Most Startling Claim Ever Made, Part 2
Scripture: John 5:21–24
Code: 43-27

Now open your Bible, if you will, to the fifth chapter of the gospel of John and we're going to try to pick up where we left off two weeks ago. We have to do a little bit of that this summer because there's an occasion or two when I will be gone, but we'll just keep moving through John, nonetheless. But I do want to go back to the passage where we left off and that would be John 5:17 to 24 with apologies to those of you who haven't been with us, we'll try to get you in some kind of a context to grasp this wonderful, this staggering portion of Scripture. Let's just look at chapter 5 of John and verse 17, let me read down to verse 24 so you have it in mind.

"Speaking of Jesus…it says…He answered them, 'My Father is working until now and I Myself am working.' For this reason, therefore, the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him because He not only was breaking the Sabbath was is calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God. Therefore Jesus 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. For the Father loves the Son and shows Him all things that He Himself is doing and the Father will show Him greater works than these so that you will marvel. For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so, the Son also gives life to whom He wishes, for not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son so that all will honor the Son even as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son, does not honor the Father who sent Him. 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 is past out of death into life.'"

Now the claim that Jesus is making here is bound up at the end of verse 19 in the very words of the Jews to whom He made the claim. They understood that He was claiming…end of verse 18…to be equal with God…to be equal with God. That is the claim that Jesus makes in this passage. That is a startling claim to the Jews. It is a shocking claim to them, and in fact because they don't believe it, it is the ultimate blasphemy. As we titled this little series, "The Most Startling Claim Ever Made," clearly that has to be it because a greater claim could not be made than to say one is equal to God. They are stunned by it. They are outraged by it. And the only thing they know to do with such a blasphemer is to kill Him. So verse 18 says, "They were seeking all the more to kill Him."

Now this claim that Jesus makes to be equal with God puts us in a position to define Jesus. It leaves us with three options. Jesus' claim forces us to three options. He says He's equal to God, option number one, that is true, that is a true claim and He is equal to God. That's option number one.

Option number two, that claim is false and He knows it. So He is a deceiver and He is a blasphemer with intent. He is an intentional blasphemer because He knows it's a lie. The third option is that the claim to be equal with God is false, and He doesn't know it. In which case He is delusional, He is a madman. He's on the level of someone who thinks he's a poached egg. He's bereft of his mental faculties.

Those are the only options. Option number one, again, it is true, He is equal to God. Option number two, it is false, He knows it's false and therefore He's a blaspheming deceiver. Option number three, it is false, that He doesn't know it's false, and therefore He's a blaspheming delusional madman. There are no other options. There are none. It is an outrage to then say that He's a good teacher. It is an equal outrage to say He's some kind of a spiritual example. Example of what? Delusional, deception, blasphemy? It is not possible to make Him into a model of religion, or some kind of pattern of spirituality or virtue, that is not a possible option.

Now, up to this point He has proven that the latter two options are ridiculous because deceivers and delusional people don't raise the dead. And they don't control the demonic world, and they don't conquer disease, and they don't take power over nature. All of which He did. And they don't speak with profound reason, divine wisdom, omniscient insight so that they know the thoughts of men and the history of people they've never met.

Option number two, that He is a deceiver and knows it, vanishes under the power of His miracles. Option number three, that He is delusional also vanishes under the power of His miracles. We're left with only one possibility. He is who He claimed to be. His miracles were never denied. Read through all four gospels, there's never one verse, one line indicating that His miracles were denied. They were undeniable. They were shocking. Yes they were sensational. They were supernatural. And they were ubiquitous, they were everywhere and they were constant, they were all the time. No one had ever seen anything like it, the people said that. Never has there ever been anything like this in Israel. No one ever heard anything like the words He spoke demonstrating supernatural knowledge, wisdom and insight. They said never a man spoke like this man…lucid, clear, rational, wise, profound. This is not a delusional man. And the miracle worker is not a deceiver.

Even Nicodemus, THE teacher in Israel said, "We know that You are a man come from God because no one can do the signs that You do unless God is with Him," John chapter 3 verse 2. And, in fact, this was universally the verdict on Jesus because there were tens of thousands of people who followed Him. He didn't do His miracles in a corner. He didn't do His miracles in a highly controlled environment like false miracle workers do today. He did His miracles every day out in the open, in the street, in the villages wherever He was. He did His miracles before masses of people day after day after day after day, literally adding up to hundreds of thousands of eyewitnesses. Huge crowds, all of them amazed, all of them drawing the same conclusion that He was doing things they had never seen or heard of. They even believed that He was from God. They followed Him as such. The crowds

followed Him everywhere He went. Albeit with superficial curiosity, with kind of a meager astonishment and we find that as soon as chapter 6, and we'll see that in a little bit, they started to leave Him, they started to fade away. In spite of all the miracles, they started leaving. And this demonstrated the power of the false religion to which they were bound. False religion holds men captive. When Paul says in 2 Corinthians 4, "The God of this world has blinded their minds," He doesn't mean that Satan himself comes in and blinds people's minds. What He means is that Satan disguised as an angel of light concocts false religious system that hold people in bondage and blindness.

This is how it is. And the system of apostate satanically controlled, hypocritical, legalistic Judaism that dominated the population of Israel was so powerful that in the face of all that Jesus did, the people still ran back to their false leaders. That's illustrated, isn't it, at the beginning of chapter 5. Jesus goes to the pool of Bethsaida on a Sabbath, He finds a man there who has been 38 years with some kind of infirmity. The man believes in a local superstition that if somebody gets in the water first when the water bubbles, that person is going to be healed. How that superstition developed, we don't know, but he can't get there because his infirmity debilitates him. Jesus comes along, he doesn't know who He is, has no idea, says, "Pick up your bed and walk." He picks up his bed and walks, instantaneously, completely, and fully healed. The man walks away. It's a Sabbath day.

The Jewish leaders castigate Jesus for doing that on a Sabbath. They say He violated the Sabbath by working on the Sabbath doing that healing as if it were work. Jesus goes to the Temple to find the man after the man leaves. He went by the Temple, no doubt, to offer thanks to God. Jesus finds him in the Temple, sits down with him, and at that point reveals Himself to him, we can assume that, and closes the conversation by saying to the man, "Go and sin no more, you've got to repent, you've got to deal with your sin." And I'm sure that was just the final statement. He wasn't saying to him, "Go and fix yourself." Jesus knew the man could not stop sinning on his own. When Jesus said "Go and sin no more," He was simply reiterating with a final warning that you better turn from your sin and embrace salvation. I'm sure He gave him a full gospel presentation. The man didn't follow Jesus, the man went right back to the Jewish leaders and turned Jesus in so they could find Jesus. That's the bondage of false religion.

Here's a man 38 years with an infirmity, Jesus comes along, delivers him on one day and the man so bound by that false religion doesn't follow Jesus, goes right back to the system of which he is a part. That's a…that's a microcosm for the whole nation. He was healing people everywhere all the time through the three years of His ministry who were just going back into the system. That's because the god of this world invented that form of Judaism to hold people bondage…in bondage.

The leaders, represented by the term "the Jews" all through John, were persecuting Jesus, according to verse 16, the persecution had already began and it escalated so that they wanted to kill Him, not just persecute Him, verse 16, they wanted all the more to kill Him when He declared that He was

equal with God.

This is the sad reality that Jesus comes who is God in human flesh. He comes to bring salvation, first to Israel and the nation under the spell of the satanic false religious system proffered by those called the Jews which are the Pharisees and the scribes and the religious elites. That is such a powerful bondage that they can't escape it on their own.

Now how is Jesus going to deal with the issue? There, verse 16, it says they were persecuting Jesus because He was doing things on the Sabbath. He could have said, "Let me talk about the Sabbath, you're overestimating the restrictions on the Sabbath, you're way out of line making silly restrictions about the Sabbath that God never intended." He could have said, "The Sabbath was made for man and it was to be a day of rest, make things easy. You've made it difficult, more difficult than any other day, you've loaded it up with bondage and rules." He could have had a discussion about the Sabbath.

He could have also said, "Look, what I did was a good deed and good deeds should be done on the Sabbath." On one other occasion, you remember, He said, "If your ox falls into the ditch on a Sabbath, you going to let it die, or you going to get it out? There's some things that overrule those kinds of restrictions and you should know that." And this man 38 years with this infirmity is delivered. They had no interest in that man. They had no compassion for that man. Legalism never does. Jesus could have discussed those issues but He didn't. He elevated the discussion from Sabbath to Christology, to His own identity. Instead of trying to explain it away to cool the Jews off, He elevated it to fire up their fury. That's what He did.

You say, "Well did He want to die? Because that's where it was going." Answer…yes. So rather than try to deescalate the impact of what He did on the Sabbath, He escalated it into the ultimate…the ultimate confrontation, the ultimate conflict, the claim that He is equal to God.

Now this speech to these Jewish leaders starts in verse 17, it goes to verse 47, the whole chapter. So we've got a lot more to look at. But in just verses 17 to 24, our Lord declares His equality with God six ways…six ways. Last time we looked at just the first few. The answer is really in summation this…I do whatever I choose to do, whenever I choose to do it because I'm God. I'm not subject to your laws. The Sabbath was made for man, I'm not merely a man. I mean that's the big answer and He begins to delineate that by making these claims in six features.

Number one, He is equal to God in nature. Verse 17, "He answered them, 'My Father is working until now and I Myself am working.'" He says "My Father," and they go ballistic. No Jew would call God His Father because in their view, father and son share the same life principles, share the same essence. Jesus is saying, "I am of the same nature as God." They pick it up, verse 18, "For this reason the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father which makes Himself equal to God." You can't say, "My Father,"

because that's to say you have the same nature as God. And then to add to that, He expresses it in another way. "The Father is working until now," in other words, the Father doesn't pay any attention to the Sabbath, the Father doesn't rest, and I don't either because that's an affirmation that I'm the same as Him. He's working, never stops, I Myself am working, never stops. God never rests, I never rest. He's working, I'm working. They got it. He was making Himself equal to God in nature.

Secondly, in verses 19 and 20 He declared Himself to be equal with God in works. Therefore Jesus 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." We talked about that a couple of weeks ago. He and His Father are one in nature, and they are therefore one in function, one in duty, one in work. The Son can do nothing of Himself. In other words, He doesn't operate independently from God. Every human being operates independently from God. We couldn't possibly blame God for everything we do. No human being could say, "Whatever God does, I do and that's all I do, I only do what God does, I do nothing else." That is such an outrageous claim coming from the lips of a man, and here stands this Galilean carpenter in a normal Galilean garb with His sandals on and His feet dirty from the dust of Jerusalem, looking into the eyes of these Jewish leaders and telling them that He is of the same nature as the eternal God and that He only does what the Father does. Stunning. Perfect unity with the Father…and by the way, it's a unity defined as love, based…that's a love-based unity, the Father loves the Son and therefore shows Him all things that He Himself is doing. The Father will show Him greater works than these so that you will marvel.

In other words, the love of the Father is so perfect for the Son that the Father has no secrets from the Son. The Father tells the Son everything, everything has …He's always known everything, He has known everything eternally, the Father has always will, that He always knows everything there is to know, there are no secrets in the Trinity. The Father doesn't know something the Son doesn't know, the Father doesn't do something the Son doesn't do. The Father doesn't will something the Son doesn't will because of the perfect love in the Trinity.

So He is equal to God in works. And while they may not see that yet, because they're going to say, "Well God has done some greater works than we've seen You do." So at the end of verse 20, Jesus says, "The Father will show greater works than these so that you will marvel." And what are the greater works? Verses 21 and 22, the final resurrection and the final judgment. Whatever it is that those people think is different about Jesus than it is than God is going to be resolved in the end when those people and all the others who reject Christ show up in the final judgment, are raised from the dead by the power of Christ and face Him as the eternal judge. So the final marveling is future.

So Christ is equal to God in nature. He is equal to God in work. He doesn't nothing independently of God. Whatever God does, He does in the same way God does it. And there's no secret that God has, there's nothing God knows therefore God does that Jesus doesn't know and do because perfect love

in the divine Trinity communicates everything perfectly.

Thirdly, this is where we left off, Jesus claims to be equal to God in power…equal to God in power. Now there are a lot of ways to talk about power. We use the word “power” for all kinds of things. But this is the ultimate power. Notice this, verse 21, :For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son also gives life to whom He wishes.”

What is the ultimate power in the universe? What is it? The ability to do what? Give life. That’s the ultimate power, to give life. The Father gives life. Acts 17, Paul on Mars Hill talking about God who gives life and breath to all. God in whom we live and move and have our existence and have our being. But remember John 1 which said, concerning the Word who is Christ, “That nothing was made that wasn’t made by Him because in Him was life.” This is the ultimate power.

It is characteristic of the eternal God that He has life as an attribute, underived, underived, uncaused…uncaused. This is the doctrine of divine aseity…divine equal, from the Latin, a-seity, from Himself. You live because you derived life. You were given life by your parents and they by their parents and it all goes back to a point in time when there was no life, except the triune God who is the eternal life and He gave life to everything. And it came in many forms. We talk about biological life. We understand what that is in the world of biology, that would include humans and all of the animate living creation. There is even inanimate life. If you look at this pulpit or the floor or the static building that you see or anything else that isn’t obviously moving, you might consider that that thing doesn’t have life, but oh does it have life, it is in motion at an incalculable speed and incalculable complexity as the atoms that make up what you think is static are moving endlessly, driven by an internal energy which is invisible and incalculable and imperceptible.

There is also that other invisible life which is spiritual life which we can’t see in each other but which is evident. All of that life, the whole of the universe whether it is apparently inanimate, or animate, invisible is all from God who made everything, or from Christ without whom nothing was made that was made. Here is this Galilean carpenter standing there saying that He is the one who has created the entire universe and He gives life only to whomever He wishes. Nothing exists that He didn’t wish to exist. Nothing came into existence by any random process…nothing. He is equal to God in power and at the ultimate level which is the ability to make something live, make something exist that previously did not exist.

It’s a staggering, staggering claim. Jesus said at the grave of Lazarus, “I am the resurrection and the life.” He is the living one and that’s repeated we’ll see in chapter 6 of John as well.

So our Lord is making these amazing claims…equal to God in nature, equal to God in work, equal to God in power. Number four, equal to God in authority…equal to God in authority. Genesis 18:25 says, “God…God the Father is the judge of all the earth.” The Jews certainly believe that. Listen to

what Jesus said in verse 22, “For not even the Father judges anyone but He has given all judgment to the Son.”

These internal realities in the Trinity are stunning for us and really hard for us to grasp because it’s hard to understand that He is God and yet with God. He is God and yet separate from God. It’s hard to understand that God is the judge and yet Christ does the judging because we can’t understand the internal workings of the Trinity. And, dear friends, that profound mystery alone should prove to you that the Bible was written by God because men would resolve those kinds of apparent paradoxes. The Father has given all judgment. The Father who is the judge of the whole earth has given all judgment to the Son. In Genesis1, God creates, John 1, when the Son creates. In the Old Testament God’s the judge. In the New Testament the Son is the judge. How can that be? Because the Son does everything the Father does in the same way the Father does it.

He is claiming…Jesus is claiming to be the supreme judge of all beings. Back in chapter 3 and verse 18, He said, “He who believes in Him, that is in the Son, is not judged. He who does not believe has been judged already because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And the Son that is rejected, the one who is rejected becomes the judge. He becomes the judge.

And by the way, the phrase in that verse has been judged already means that people aren’t waiting for judgment in the future. This is the illusion of religion, that you live your life and you do good, and you do good, and you do good and if the good outweighs the bad, you know, God’s keeping a record and at the end He’ll make a judgment. No. You’ve been judged already. All that work doesn’t mean anything. All that goodness doesn’t mean a thing in terms of your eternity. You’ve been judged already because you believe not on the Son.

You say, “Well what about the future judgment?” That’s only the execution. The verdict was made when you arrived in this world rejecting the Son and it continues to be the same verdict until you believe. And if you never believe, that verdict is set. The final judgment is just the execution. What you do along the way of good works is meaningless. So the Son is equal to the Father in judgment, startling claims.

All of that leads to an amazing claim in verse 23…an amazing claim. “So consequence here, So, that all will honor the Son even as they honor the Father.” That’s a positive statement. Since the Son is the one who gives life to whom He wishes, since the Son is the one to whom all judgment is committed…let me say it simply…since the Son is the reason you exist and the Son is the one who determines your eternal destiny, since the Son is the beginning and the end, since the Son is the alpha and the omega, the Son is to be honored even as the Father is honored. You can understand how absolutely devastating such a claim was coming from a man standing there talking to them. This is the consequence of all the previous claims, “So that the only possible right response to the one who created everything and who will bring everything to its consummation, and who, by the way, in

the middle upholds everything by the word of His power, the only possible response is that He is to be honored in the same way that God is to be honored.

You know, you read theologians who say, “Well Jesus never claimed to be God.” That’s absurd, of course He did. Of course He did, right here, there’s no mistaking that. He insists that He is to be worshiped in the same way God is. He is to be honored, praised, adored, respected, trusted, obeyed in the same way as God the Father. That’s the positive statement at the beginning of verse 3. Then he flips it to a negative in verse 23, “He who does not honor the Son, does not honor the Father who sent Him.” They were all fiercely loyal, those Jews, to the Old Testament revelation of the one true God. Look, they had had their idolatry scrubbed out during the Babylonian captivity. They no longer tampered with idols. That went away. They were monotheists to the bone, one true God, no other God tolerated. Here they are face-to-face with a Galilean carpenter who is a miracle working preacher who says they are to worship Him in the same way they worship the one true God. They have to give Him equal honor, equal respect. Equal worship.

In the sixth chapter and verse 28, the people say, “What shall we do so that we may work the works of God?” What does God want out of us? And Jesus answered and said to them, “This is the work of God that you believe in Him whom He sent.” You want to do God’s work? Then you have to believe in Me which means believe that I am who I claim to be and who God has declared Me to be…remember at the baptism, God says out of heaven, “This is My beloved Son in whom I am well-pleased.”

Listen to John 15:23, “He who hates Me, hates My Father also. He who hates Me, hates My Father also.” It’s a popular thing today, strange but popular thing in evangelical Christianity to imagine that Jews in particular and maybe some other groups as well, but particularly Jews, don’t have to believe in Christ, that somehow if they’re just good Jews and they believe the Old Testament and believe in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of Israel, the Creator God of the Old Testament that God doesn’t require them to believe in Jesus, that’s a very popular doctrine proffered by some very popular evangelical preachers. They don’t need to believe in Jesus. If that were the case, Jesus never would have said this, “If you don’t honor the Son, you don’t honor the Father. If you hate Me, you hate the Father.” That is an absurdity as well as a damning lie to pass on to Jews.

I remember having a conversation with Larry King one night after we did a television program who is Jewish and we developed a pretty good friendship then, and he said to me, he said, “You know, John, I’m going to be okay…going to be okay.” I said, “What do you mean you’re going to be okay?” “I think I’m going to make it to heaven.” I said “Based on what, Larry?” He said, and he named a certain evangelist and said, “He told me because I’m Jewish, I’m going to be okay.” That may be the worst thing that anybody told him. But to come from a Christian evangelist to tell him that? There is no way to God except through Christ…no way.

So here is Jesus making these claims. He is either to be worshiped or He is to be shunned. And He demands worship. You cannot embrace God at all without embracing Jesus. So much more to say about that. But let's go on to a final claim.

Equal I nature, equal in works, equal in power, equal in authority, equal in honor and equal in truth…equal in truth. This takes us to verse 24. "Truly, truly I say to you, he who hears My Word and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life." Hears and believes are one and the same. When He says "He who hears My words," He means hear it with faith. And then says, "And believes assumes you heard." How could you believe if you hadn't heard? So that's just…those are just synonyms. What it says here is to have eternal life, you have to hear and believe My Word and you have to hear and believe the Word of Him who sent Me. That is to say, you must believe what came from God and what came from Christ. To make it real simple, the Old and the New Testament. It's not enough to believe the Old Testament and stop at that point. In fact, Jesus uses truly, truly again, that little formula appears 25 times in the gospel of John. You already saw it back in verse 19. And Jesus used it because He was saying things to them that were true against the backdrop of their deception and the lies that they believed. And it's a statement for the purpose of being emphatic, "Truly, truly I say to you, eternal life, which is escape from judgment, deliverance from condemnation, eternal life comes to those who hear and believe My Word and who hear and believe the Word of Him who sent Me." Those are the people who have eternal life, those are the people who do not come into judgment but are passed out of death into life. You escape judgment, you escape eternal death only when you believe what the Father says and what the Son says because they both speak the same truth.

All the teaching, all the claims, all the commands that come from Christ, all the revelation concerning Christ that fills the New Testament, all the revelation, all the claims, all the commands, all the truths, all the doctrines, all the realities from the Father that make up the Old Testament, that point to Christ and to the need of man, they all must be believed cause they're equal in truth. Anybody who says that Jesus is inferior to God, fails to understand all of this and puts his eternal soul in jeopardy. To say, as the Mormons do, that Jesus is a created spirit brother of Lucifer who was created by a god who was created by another god is a damning heresy. If there are any Mormons here today, listening to this, my fear is that just like the Jews, you will hear everything I say and you will run back into the bondage of the corrupt system that holds you captive. You must flee. This is the truth. This is the truth.

This is not just John's record of what Jesus said as if it sort of stands isolated in the New Testament. Let me close by taking you to Hebrews chapter 1. Hebrews chapter 1. This sounds like an echo of John 5:17 to 24. We said equal in truth, listen to this, "God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets, in many portions and in many ways…" Okay, that's how God spoke in the Old Testament. In many portions, in many different ways, He spoke through visions, voices from heaven, spoke through the *urim and thummin* on the breast of the High Priest. He spoke sometimes through lots, he spoke through dreams, he spoke directly to prophets and writers of Holy Scripture, in many ways, in many different portions. In these last days has spoken to us in His Son. This is the

presentation of Christ. The prophets revealed God but Jesus reveals God fully. In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.

The prophets received many portions and in many ways the truth about God. It was a fragmentary revelation of God. Jesus is the full revelation of God. In Him God did not display some facets of Himself, but fully reveals Himself. We see the glory of God shining in the face of Jesus…Paul says. In these last days, that is the days in which the Lord has come, God speaks to us in His Son. In Christ, the revelation of God is full, it is complete. Not in the drifting hues and separated colors of the Old Testament, but in the pure blazing light, uniting in one person the whole spectrum of divine revelation. Christ is God revealed in His fullness.

And then He goes on to say He is the heir of all things. He is the one through whom He made the world. He is the radiance of His glory, the exact representation of His nature, upholds all things by the Word of His power. He's the one who made purification of sins and then He sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high.

The writer of Hebrews is saying the Son, Christ, is the end of all things. That is He's the heir. He is the beginning of all things, He is the creator. He is the center of all things, He upholds everything by the Word of His power. He is the beginning. He is the end, the Alpha and the Omega. He is also the middle. He appointed Him, His Son, heir of all things. All things were made by Him and for Him, for Him. He is the one who takes the title deed in the book of Revelation and takes back the universe as His own. He is the ultimate heir of everything because He is the Creator of everything. It was through Him that the world was made.

By the way, the word "world" is often *kosmos* in the Greek. It is not such here. It is the word *aiones(?)* . *Aiones* doesn't technically mean world. It means ages. It is stressing the fact that He didn't just make the world, that is to say the earth and the complex systems of life that are here. This is not strictly the physical earth, but is a reference to the fact that He has created ages. That is to say He has created time and space and force and energy and matter and everything. He is the Creator of absolutely everything. He is the Creator of the incalculable microcosm of the universe, stunning, incomprehensible creation. He's the Creator of your heart that beats 800 million times in a lifetime. He made it all.

He is also the radiance of the glory of God. What do we understand by that? *Apaugasma*, brightness, He puts God on display. He's called in John 1 the light, right? We talked about that. He is the light.

How are we to understand that He is the light that shines from God? Maybe you can understand it this way. The radiance of the sun reaches the earth, lights the earth, warms the earth, gives life and growth to the earth. So in Christ, the glorious light of God shines into the hearts of men, produces light and life. The brightness of the sun is the same as the sun. It is as old as the sun. The brightness

of the sun has always been with the sun, never was the sun without its brightness. The brightness of the sun cannot be separated from the sun and yet the brightness of the sun is not the sun. Maybe in some way that illustrates how Christ is the brightness of God. Without the sun there is no light. He said, “I am the light of the world,” John 8:12. So He is God on display…the glory of God shining in the face of Christ.

Further describing who He is, He is the exact representation of His nature…the exact substance of God’s nature. He is what God is. There is no difference. He is the essence of God.

You know, it’s just so parallel, it reminds us of one of the great doctrines of Scripture called *analogia scriptura.* And that is to say Scripture is analogous to itself, when compared with itself, it will be found to be absolutely true and consistent.

He is the one, also, according to verse 3, who upholds all things by the Word of His power. Compare Colossians 1:17…Colossians 1:17. “He is before all things and in Him all things hold together.” He holds the universe together. He created it, He’s the end of it, it will all resolve in His glory and He sustains it, supporting it, just beyond comprehension. If the earth’s rotation slowed down a little bit, we would alternately freeze and burn. If the surface temperature of the sun was a little hotter or a little cooler, we would all alternately freeze and burn.

If the globe which is tilted on its axis in an exact angle of 23 degrees, where altered, we would lose our seasons. Vapors from the ocean would move north and south and pile up continents of ice everywhere. If the moon didn’t remain at an exact distance from the earth, the ocean tide would inundate the land completely twice a day. If the ocean slipped to a few feet deeper than it is carbon dioxide and the oxygen in the earth’s atmosphere would be completely absorbed and no vegetable life could exist. If the atmosphere didn’t remain constant, but thinned out, meteors which explode harmlessly when they enter the atmosphere would hit the earth and we would be constantly bombarded to death.

Who holds all this in a delicate balance? That Galilean carpenter standing there looking at those Jews that day. This is who He is. And, says the writer, when He made purification of sin, when He did His work on the cross and rose from the dead, He went to take His rightful place and sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high, right where He belonged, the very place from which He came.

Now go back to John 5 and let’s wrap it up. What is the end of this? What is the response of these Jews to what Jesus says? Let’s just look at verse 37 and kind of jump ahead.

“And the Father who sent Me, He has testified of Me.” How? At His baptism, “This is My beloved Son whom I’m well-pleased,” through His miracles, through His words, through John the Baptist. He says to them, “You have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His form. You do not have His Word

abiding in you, for you do not believe Him whom He sent."

Can I say it any better? Of course not. If you don't embrace the Son, you don't know God at all. You search the Scriptures cause you think in them you have eternal life. It is these that testify about Me and you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life. Whoever doesn't come to the Son, doesn't have life. This is the Christian message. Neither is there salvation in any other name, there's no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved. I am the way, the truth and the life. No man comes to the Father but by Me, John 14. The Father give His testimony, you don't know Him, you don't know His voice, you don't know His will, you don't have His Word in you because you don't believe in Me. And you go on probing the Old Testament because you think that by doing that you'll earn eternal life. And the Old Testament points to Me and you're unwilling to come to Me that you might have life.

That is the simple message that has been preached since that day in Jerusalem by every faithful preacher and evangelist throughout the history of the church. There's no salvation apart from Christ who is the Son of God. And for those who think somehow it's a noble thing to just assign Him the identity of a good teacher, you don't have that option. Either His claim is true, or He's a blasphemer. And if His claim is true, then Christianity is real and the gospel is true. If He's not God, there is no Christianity. The whole thing is a deception. But the evidence is sustainable, powerful, unconquerable that He is who He claimed to be. And that you must believe to be saved. Confess Him as Lord, believe in your heart, and receive eternal life.

Father, we thank You, this morning, that You have given us the opportunity to gather. Thank You that You have drawn us into this passage because we are profoundly enriched and blessed by its truth. What is more wonderful than knowing Christ? Knowing everything we can about Him? Grasping who He is? For this leads to worship and praise and love and adoration and obedience and faithfulness and righteousness. We pray for those who have not believed. Shatter the darkness, give life, draw them to Yourself that they might believe. May the sinner live in fear who rejects cause the consequences are so dire and everlasting. Lift up Christ and through Him draw men to Yourself.

For those of us who know the Lord, may this help us to love Him more and obey Him more eagerly, more faithfully. How great is Your goodness to us and Your grace that You would give us life in His name who are unworthy sinners? Fill our hearts with grateful praise.

Father, we do ask that You would do a work in hearts. I have no power to do that, none whatsoever. That all belongs to You. All we can do is sow the seed of the truth. We ask that You would confirm it, affirm it, use it to penetrate hearts for Your glory, we pray in the name of Christ. Amen.

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