

“A JOURNEY THROUGH THE GOSPEL OF JOHN” SERIES

#9: “Jesus Is Truly God’s Son”

SCRIPTURE: John 5:18-47

INTRO:

Jesus had just healed a man on the Sabbath, which to the Jews was a really bad thing. Not only that, but He had told the healed man to *“take up his bed.”* That was also a no-no on the Sabbath.

Many of the Jews, especially the Pharisees, followed the Torah or Law of Moses or written law by carrying out the commands and rules of the Talmud, which was the oral traditional law of the elders. The Pharisees had developed a system of 613 laws, 365 negative commands and 248 positive laws. For example, in the Mosaic Law, one of the commandments is to keep the Sabbath holy, which means that Jews were not supposed to work on Saturdays. But to clarify this, the Jewish scholars created 39 separate categories of what “work” means, and within those 39 categories there are many sub-categories. So, to follow the rule of not working on the Sabbath, there are literally thousands of sub-rules to follow, including how many steps you can take, and how many letters you can write on the Sabbath.

To the contrary, Jesus said the Law could be summed up in two commands: Love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and love your neighbor as yourself.

So, the Jews couldn’t stand Jesus. They couldn’t stand His teaching. They wanted to kill Him. In fact, they finally did, didn’t they?

Note three things here that the Jews couldn’t stand. First of all,

THEY COULDN’T STAND HIS CLAIM TO BE EQUAL WITH GOD.

“He was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God”
(v. 18).

For centuries, the Jews had been monotheistic – that is, they worshiped only one God – Jehovah. They knew that Messiah was coming, but they didn’t think of Him as equal with Jehovah. So, when Jesus claimed to be equal with God, they got really angry and sought every opportunity to reveal him as a fraud.

It’s sometimes said that Jesus was killed on account of his inclusion and tolerance, that the Jews hated him for hanging out with sinners and tax collectors. This is the sort of sentiment which has a bit of truth to it, but only a tiny bit. No doubt, Jesus upset many of the Jewish leaders because he extended fellowship and mercy beyond their constricted boundaries, but it’s misleading to

suggest that Jesus was hated for simply being too loving, as if his inspiring tolerance was the cause of the Jew's implacable intolerance.

The Jewish leaders disliked, and eventually grew to hate, Jesus for many reasons. Mark 15:3 says the chief priests "accused him of many things." They were angry with him for upsetting their traditions and some of their scruples about the law. They looked down on him for eating with sinners and associating with those deemed unclean or unworthy. But most of all, they hated Jesus because he claimed to be *from* God, and as time went on, dared to make himself *equal to* God.

Second,

THEY COULDN'T STAND HIS CLAIM TO HAVE THE AUTHORITY OF GOD.

¹⁹ So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise. ²⁰ For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing. And greater works than these will he show him, so that you may marvel. ²¹ For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will. ²² For the Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son, ²³ that all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him. ²⁴ Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment but has passed from death to life.

These words, no doubt, incensed the Jews. He was not only claiming to be equal with God, but He was claiming to have the authority of God!

As far as they were concerned, Jesus was just a guy from Nazareth – Nazareth, of all places. Nothing good has ever come from Nazareth!

In the words of commentator Paul Butler, "*They stalk him like wild beasts of prey. Henceforth they will pursue His every move, making occasion to trap Him and do away with Him*" (p. 182).

That's why they hated him; that's why the crowds turned on him; that's why Jesus was put to death. The Jewish leaders could not bring themselves to recognize His divine authority and identity. Jealousy was no doubt part of it. But deeper than that, they simply did not have the eyes to see or the faith to believe that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God. That's why in all four gospels, when the opposition against him reaches its climax, Jesus is charged with being a false king, a false prophet, and a false Messiah. They killed Jesus because they thought he was a fake.

It was the implicit and explicit claims Jesus made to authority, Messiahship, and God-ness that ultimately did him in.

Third,

THEY COULDN'T STAND THE CLAIMS OF JOHN – THAT HE WAS THE LAMB OF GOD THAT TAKES AWAY THE SIN OF THE WORLD.

Note verses 33 through 36:

³³ You sent to John, and he has borne witness to the truth. ³⁴ Not that the testimony that I receive is from man, but I say these things so that you may be saved. ³⁵ He was a burning and shining lamp, and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light. ³⁶ But the testimony that I have is greater than that of John. For the works that the Father has given me to accomplish, the very works that I am doing, bear witness about me that the Father has sent me.

The Jews were willing to listen to the message of John the Baptizer – that the Messiah was coming – that God's promise was about to be fulfilled – until he pointed to Jesus and said, ***"Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"***

Jesus said to the Jews, ***"(John) was a burning and shining lamp, and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light."*** But when the Messiah turned out to be an itinerate preacher who grew up in Nazareth, they decided that John must have been crazy from having lived too long in the wilderness by himself – that he had eaten too many locusts or something.

Note what Jesus said at this point:

"THE TESTIMONY I HAVE IS GREATER THAN THAT OF JOHN."

Jesus mentioned three things that make His testimony greater than that of John.

1. ***"...the works that the Father has given me to accomplish, the very works that I am doing, bear witness about me that the Father has sent me."***

What was it that the Father had sent Him into the world to accomplish? Was it not to be the payment of ransom for the souls of believers – to die for the sins of the world? Was that not the work that the Father had sent Him to do?

2. ***"You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life, and it is they that bear witness about me, yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life."***

What Scriptures did they have? Were they not that which we call the Old Testament? Is the Messiah not promised and described in the Old Testament?

How did they miss making the connection between Jesus of Nazareth and the Messiah? They were seeing but not seeing.

3. ***“There is one who accuses you: Moses on whom you have set your hope. For if you had believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe me words?”***

Where did Moses write of Jesus? He wrote of Him in Genesis 3:15 where he wrote: ***“I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”*** Jesus was the offspring of Mary, who was the offspring of Eve. Satan would wound Jesus in the heel – not a fatal wound, but Jesus would bruise the head of Satan – a fatal blow.

Moses wrote about Noah, who built an ark, which was a type of Christ that revealed the grace of God that He would show through the giving of His Son as a sacrifice for sin. Peter made the connection in 1 Peter 3, where he wrote about the ark providing salvation to ***“eight persons, who were brought safely through the water”*** and compares that to Christian baptism.

Moses wrote about the ***“regard”*** that God had for ***“the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions”*** that Abel presented to Him and the ***“no regard”*** He had for Cain’s offering of ***“the fruit of the ground.”*** This was a foreshadow of the sacrifice of Christ, which would be sufficient to atone for the sins of the world.

And there is more about the coming Messiah in the writings of Moses. The Jews should have known all these things, but, as Jesus said here in verse 42: ***“...you do not have the love of God within you.”***

IN CLOSING...

Verse 47 is a verse for our society today: ***“But if you do not believe (the writings of Moses), how will you believe my words?”*** So many today reject Moses’ account of creation, the fall from grace, the flood, the ark, and the early history of man. It’s no wonder that they reject Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God.