

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

RISING OPPOSITION TO JESUS' MINISTRY, JOHN 5:1-12:50

JESUS SECOND VISIT TO JERUSALEM, JOHN 5:1-47

INTRODUCTION

A. Outline of the *Gospel of John* (1:1-4:42)

1. Prologue (1:1-18)
2. Preparation for Jesus' ministry (1:19-51)
3. Jesus' early ministry (2:1-4:54)
4. Rising opposition to Jesus' ministry (5:1-12:50)
 - a. Jesus' second visit to Jerusalem (5:1-47)
 - 1) Healing with conflict (5:1-18)
 - a) The third sign: healing the paralytic (5:1-9a)
 - b) Conflict with Jewish authorities (9b-18)
 - 2) Instruction concerning His Sonship (19-47)
 - a) Jesus' authority (19-29)
 - b) The Father's witness to Jesus (30-47)

B. Context

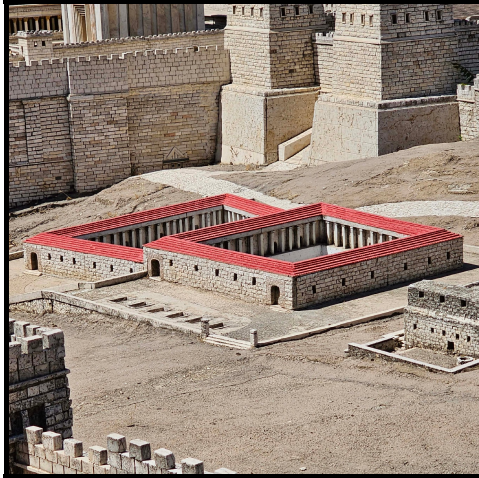
- Warren Wiersbe, *Our Lord's first two miracles recorded by John were somewhat private in nature. The servants and the disciples knew that He transformed the water into wine, and the servants and the nobleman's family knew that He had healed the sick son. The miracle recorded in John 5 was not only public, but it was performed on the Sabbath Day and incited the opposition of the religious leaders.*
- Charles Swindoll, *When Jesus cleansed the temple, He claimed ownership of Judaism's most visible symbols. His purpose was to restore worship. On His next visit to Jerusalem, He claimed ownership of Judaism's most treasured institution: the Sabbath. His purpose on that occasion was to restore grace.*
- This event is the beginning of hostility of the Jewish leaders toward Jesus which surrounds Jesus' proclamation of His authority over the Sabbath and His identification of His equality with God

HEALING WITH CONFLICT, JOHN 5:1-18

A. The third sign: healing the paralytic (5:1-9a)

1. Jesus' return to Jerusalem (1), *After this there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.*
 - a. He was in Jerusalem during a feast. It was probably Passover, Pentecost, or Tabernacles.
 - b. The feast was mentioned by John to explain why Jesus returned to Jerusalem.
 - c. Leon Morris, *Jesus followed the practice of the pious men of his day by going up to Jerusalem to observe festivals. Indeed, John's indefinite reference to "a feast" may be intended to convey as much (it may imply that it was not only for specific, outstanding feasts that Jesus went up).*
2. Jesus visited the hurting (2-4)
 - a. He went to the Pool of Bethesda (2-3a), *Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate a pool, in Aramaic called Bethesda, which has five roofed colonnades. 3 In these lay a multitude of invalids—blind, lame, and paralyzed*
 - 1) The pool of Bethesda
 - a) The name *Bethesda* means *house of mercy*.
 - b) It was located near the Sheep Gate, a gate in the northeastern part of Jerusalem's wall. The gate is now called Lion's Gate. At the time of Jesus, the gate was the entrance for sheep being taken to the Temple for sacrifice.
 - c) It was just east of Antonia Fortress and just northeast of the Temple.
 - d) There were two pools with a covered colonnade or portico on four sides of the complex and a fifth colonnade that separated the two pools.

- e) Grant Osborne, *Archaeological excavations near the Church of Saint Anne have uncovered large twin pools, surrounded by four colonnades or covered porches, with a fifth one between the pools.*



A model of the Pool of Bethesda at the Israel Museum



Looking down into a section of the Pool of Bethesda

- 2) The pool attracted disabled people.
- a) The pool complex was probably a religious sanitarium identified with Asclepius the Greek god of medicine.
 - b) Charles Swindoll, *When Jesus arrived in Jerusalem, He apparently visited this pagan sanitarium, which lay in the shadow of the great temple built by Herod. The temple authorities, especially the Pharisees among them, would never have entered the place and probably rebuked any Jew who did.*
 - c) Charles Ryrie, *Under their shelter lay a miserable group of human beings, some blind, some lame, some with withered limbs, many helpless, but all hopeless, or they would not have been there.*
 - d) Thomas Constable, *Many disabled people used to lie in these porticoes because of the healing elements in the water.*
 - e) Edwin Blum, *The great number of disabled people pictures the sad spiritual plight of the world.*
 - f) Leon Morris, *They thought that a periodic disturbance of the waters was due to an angel and that the first to enter the pool after such a disturbance would be healed ... The disturbance may have been caused by the intermittent bubbling up of a natural spring.*
 - g) It is a picture of helplessness which can only be overcome by hope that comes through faith in Christ.
- b. Notes concerning contested verses (3b-4), ***waiting for the moving of the water; for an angel of the Lord went down at certain seasons into the pool, and stirred the water: whoever stepped in first after the stirring of the water was healed of whatever disease he had.***
- 1) There is no manuscript before 400 A.D. which contains verses 3b-4.
 - 2) Scribes may have added these statements later to explain why the sick people were there, in hope of a miracle. Regardless, it gives the background for why people were there and what they hoped would happen.
 - 3) Thomas Constable, *This section of the text has doubtful authenticity. No Greek manuscript before A.D. 400 contains these words. Evidently scribes added these statements later to explain the troubling of the waters that occurred periodically (v. 7). However, these scribal explanations were probably based on a superstition ... A more probable explanation for the troubling of the water is the presence of springs that occasionally gushed water into the pools below the surface of the water. Probably the water had a high mineral content that had medicinal benefits for people suffering from muscle and joint ailments.*
 - 4) Charles Swindoll, *A curious blend of Hebrew religion and Greek superstition held that an angel of God periodically stirred the waters and promised healing to the first invalid able to pull himself into the pool. There could not have been a more fitting image of legalistic religion in all of Israel ... desperately sick people, all waiting to race each other in a pathetic scramble of invalids in which healing went to the least needy person among them.*
 - 5) Edwin Blum, *...the Bible nowhere teaches this kind of superstition, a situation which would be a most cruel contest for many ill people.*

- c. Jesus performed a miracle (5-9a)
- a) He approached a man and asked him a question (5-6), **One man was there who had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. 6 When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had already been there a long time, he said to him, “Do you want to be healed?”**
 - 1) Jesus focused on one man who had been an invalid for 38 years.
 - a) Thomas Constable, *John’s reference to the length of his illness seems to be just to document its seriousness and the man’s hopeless condition.*
 - b) Charles Swindoll, ... *He found a man who had suffered “in his sickness” for thirty-eight years, longer than the average life expectancy for a male in the first-century Roman Empire.*
 - c) Edwin Blum, *John did not say what kind of physical problem he had or if he was an invalid from birth. In any case his condition was hopeless.*
 - d) Leon Morris, *The supposedly healing water had effected no cure in all those years. It is against this background that John sets Jesus’ healing word of power.*
 - e) His illness was some kind of paralysis that left him unable to walk according to verse 7.
 - 2) Why did Jesus pick this man out of all those in desperate need at the Pool of Bethesda?
 - a) Jesus knew the man’s condition and chose Him for blessing.
 - b) Merrill Tenney, *Jesus’ selection of this man from the large number of invalids at the pool indicated His interest in restoring those who have been reduced to utter helplessness both in body and spirit.*
 - c) The purpose of a miracle is to authenticates God and His message.
 - d) We will see that Jesus’ work in this man’s life was more than the miracle of healing but when He performed the miracle. It would become the beginning of the nation’s rejection of Jesus as Messiah.
 - 3) Jesus asked the man if he wanted to be healed.
 - a) Warren Wiersbe, *You would think that the man would have responded with an enthusiastic, “Yes! I want to be healed!” But, instead, he began to give excuses! He had been in that sad condition for so long that his will was as paralyzed as his body.*
 - b) Grant Osborne, *At first glance it seems a silly question—of course he does! But Jesus wants the man to get involved in the process, not to remain passive throughout.*
 - c) Edwin Blum, *Jesus’ seemingly strange question, Do you want to get well? was designed to focus the man’s attention on Him, to stimulate his will, and to raise his hopes. In the spiritual realm man’s great problem is that either he does not recognize he is sick ... or he does not want to be cured.*
 - d) William Barclay, *The first essential towards receiving the power of Jesus is to have intense desire for it ... If in our inmost hearts we are well content to stay as we are, there can be no change for us.*
 - e) Leon Morris, *It is noteworthy that Jesus takes the initiative (as in the case of all the “signs” in this Gospel except the healing of the nobleman’s son). He does not wait for this man to approach him.*
 - b. The invalid responded to Jesus question (7), **The sick man answered him, “Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, and while I am going another steps down before me.”**
 - 1) The man hoped for years that someone would help him into the pool at the right time.
 - 2) Grant Osborne, *The lame man considers Jesus just another bystander and begs for help (v. 7). He had no one to help him get to the water when it was stirred up, and he earnestly believed the tradition to such an extent that he came regularly to the pool.*
 - 3) Thomas Constable, *The man’s statement that he had no one to help him appears to have been a veiled request that Jesus would volunteer to be that helper.*
 - 4) Charles Swindoll, *While the invalid clearly recognized his own helplessness, he placed his faith in the wrong object. He lay in a pagan temple, relying on a bit of superstition ...*
 - c. Jesus healed the man (8-9a), **Jesus said to him, “Get up, take up your bed, and walk.” 9 And at once the man was healed, and he took up his bed and walked.**
 - 1) Jesus gave the man a command.
 - a) He didn’t tell the man that He would help him get into the pool when the waters were stirred but told him to do something he had not done for 38 years.
 - b) When Jesus tells a person to do something, He gives him the ability to do it.
 - c) Charles Swindoll, *Jesus didn’t preach. He didn’t correct the man’s failing theology. He didn’t lecture him on grace. People who lack hope don’t need more knowledge; they need compassion. Jesus gave the man what he lacked and so desperately needed. He gave him grace in the form of a command: “Get up, pick up your pallet and walk.”*
 - d) William Barclay, ... *miracles happen when our will and God’s power co-operate to make them possible.*

2. The man's faith in the words of Jesus was evident by his response.
 - a) Jesus did not grab the man, pull him up, and show that he could now stand and walk.
 - b) The man had to respond by faith to the words of Jesus.
 - c) Grant Osborne, *One can only imagine his feelings as he felt the healing power of God flow through his emaciated body. He could have visibly watched the muscles in his legs grow as he lay there. His crippling disease was not just taken away; his muscles were given a strength they had never before possessed ...*
 - d) F. F. Bruce, *What made him better ... Nothing but the enabling command of Christ, to which his will responded obediently. Thus he received power to do what a moment earlier had been quite beyond his capacity.*

3. The miracle was a blessing for the man.
 - a) Thomas Constable, *Jesus' words healed the man (cf. vv. 25, 28–29; 11:43). They also instructed him (cf. Mark 2:11).*
 - b) It was an act of mercy on God's part with no indication that the man receive spiritual healing at this point.
 - c) Leon Morris, *This healing differs from many others in that, not only is there no mention of faith on the part of the man, but there seems to be no room for it. He did not even know Jesus' name (v. 13).*
 - d) William Barclay, *When we have intensity of desire and determination to make the effort, hopeless though it may seem, the power of Christ gets its opportunity, and with him we can conquer the things that for a long time have conquered us.*

4. The miracle was confirmation of Who Jesus is.
 - a) Jesus is Messiah, Isaiah 35:4c-6, *...He will come and save you." Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy...*
 - b) Edwin Blum, *Here in Jerusalem was a public sign that the Messiah had come.*
 - c) Leon Morris, *We must feel that, while faith was commonly the prerequisite of healing, it was not absolutely necessary. Jesus is not limited by human frailty as he works the works of God.*
 - d) Thomas Constable, *By carrying his pallet on the Sabbath the man triggered a controversy. By commanding him to do so Jesus was responsible for the situation that followed. Indeed He deliberately created it.*

B. Conflict with Jewish authorities (9b-18)

1. They accused the man of breaking the law (9b-10), ***Now that day was the Sabbath. So the Jews said to the man who had been healed, "It is the Sabbath, and it is not lawful for you to take up your bed."***
 - a. Related verses
 - 1) Romans 9:14, *What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God's part? By no means!*
 - 2) Exodus 20:10, *but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates.*
 - 3) Jeremiah 17:22, *And do not carry a burden out of your houses on the Sabbath or do any work, but keep the Sabbath day holy, as I commanded your fathers.*

 - b. Comments
 - 1) Their statement was not from the Old Testament but from their manmade interpretations.
 - a) Charles Swindoll, *"Oh, by the way, it was the Sabbath." Anyone who knew anything about Pharisees understood the significance of that simple statement.*
 - b) God's intent for the Sabbath was to free people from having to earn a living seven days a week, a time to rest and worship God.
 - c) Warren Wiersbe, *Instead of rejoicing at the wonderful deliverance of the man, the religious leaders condemned him for carrying his bed and thereby breaking the law.*
 - d) Edwin Blum, *The Jews' rigid tradition (not the Old Testament) taught that if anyone carried anything from a public place to a private place on the Sabbath intentionally, he deserved death by stoning. In this case the man who was healed was in danger of losing his life.*
 - e) Thomas Constable, *By carrying his pallet on the Sabbath, the man triggered a controversy. By commanding him to do so, Jesus was responsible for the situation that followed.*

- f) Leon Morris, *These Jews reminded the man who had been cured that it was the Sabbath (their word order stresses this word), and that therefore it was not lawful for him to lift up his pallet, let alone carry it. They probably had in mind such passages as Jeremiah 17:21ff. and Nehemiah 13:15. These were in origin protests against the tendency to secularize the Sabbath. It is not just another day of business. It is God's day. It must be kept free from worldly pursuits. So the regulations began in the laudable attempt to safeguard the holiness of the day. But in time they became so many, and drew so many absurd distinctions, that the true character of the day was lost in the manner of its observance. Jesus' attitude recalled people to the real meaning of the Sabbath.*
- g) Charles Swindoll, *The Lord instituted the Sabbath as a gift. He ordered a day of rest to rejuvenate the bodies and minds of His people. More important, He gave it in order to break the day-in, day-out cycle of routine so that people would not forget that God is the ultimate source of their sustenance; their labors are but a means of His provision.*
- 2) The religious leaders showed no compassion even though God had shown mercy.
- a) F. F. Bruce, *Here, as regularly in the Gospel of John, it is important to mark who exactly "the Jews" in question are. In this context they are members of the religious establishment in Jerusalem.*
- b) Thomas Constable, *This is the first open hostility to Jesus that John recorded.*
- c) Charles Rylie, *...you would think the Jews would be glad to see the man fully recovered. But traditions meant more to them than people.*
- d) Richard Milne, *Outward conformity replaced heart commitment.*
- e) Charles Swindoll, *The Sabbath gave people permission to stop work so they would not neglect a vital need: worship. We are created for worship; therefore, worship is good for us. But the Pharisees turned this wonderful gift of God into a burden, an occasion for severe criticism, an excuse to exercise power-yet another opportunity to remind themselves and everyone else of their superior moral worth.*
2. The man's response (11), ***But he answered them, "The man who healed me, that man said to me, 'Take up your bed, and walk.'"***
- a. Edwin Blum, *The healed man realized this difficulty and tried to evade any responsibility for violating tradition by saying he was just following orders.*
- b. Grant Osborne, *When the leaders accuse him of breaking the Sabbath laws by carrying his mat (v. 10), he shifts the blame from himself to Jesus, who told him to take up his mat and walk (v. 11). He shows little or no gratitude but cares only for himself.*
- c. Leon Morris, *The man was not of the stuff of which heroes are made. He put the whole blame on the shoulders of him who had healed him.*
- d. Thomas Constable, *The Jewish leaders wanted to know who had dared to contradict the accepted meaning of the fourth commandment. In their eyes, Jesus was a worse offender than the man who had carried his pallet.*
- e. F. F. Bruce, *The lifting of his pallet, in fact, was one of the conditions for his cure. But in his reply there may be the implication that one who was able to work such a cure must be possessed of peculiar authority, and that to obey such a person's command seemed a clear duty.*
3. The religious leaders asked who healed him (12-13), ***They asked him, "Who is the man who said to you, 'Take up your bed and walk?'" 13 Now the man who had been healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had withdrawn, as there was a crowd in the place.***
- a. The religious leaders wanted the healed man to identify the one who healed him.
- 1) Their concern was to protect their manmade regulations and not so they could rejoice that an invalid of 38 years could walk.
- 2) *Who is the man...?* is still the most important question a person can ever ask.
- b. The man did not know who had healed him.
- 1) Thomas Constable, *The man did not know who Jesus was. This indicates that it was not his faith that had elicited the healing as much as God's grace reaching out to a needy person.*
- 2) Edwin Blum, *This seems to be a case in which healing was done in the absence of faith. The invalid was chosen by Jesus as an act of grace because of his need and also to display God's glory in him.*
- 3) Grant Osborne, *When these authorities ask for the identity of the individual who had done such a thing (v. 12), the man shows he had not even bothered to learn the name of the healer. He was so self-centered that he was not even interested in getting to know who could have performed such an astounding miracle. When the man learns Jesus' identity, he reports Jesus to the leaders (next section). Step by step, the man turns away from following Jesus and joins the Jewish authorities against Jesus.*

- c. Jesus' healing on the Sabbath was the beginning of the nation's rejection of Jesus as Messiah.
 - 1) Thomas Constable, ... *the leaders did not show any interest in the man's cured condition. That should have shown them that Jesus was the Messiah, but they saw the Healer as simply an offender.*
 - 2) Charles Swindoll, *Instead of looking for a wonder-worker to praise, the Pharisees went in search of a troublemaker to censure. But Jesus could not be found because of the multitude.*

4. Jesus counseled the healed man in the Temple (14), **Afterward Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, "See, you are well! Sin no more, that nothing worse may happen to you."**
 - a. Related verses
 - 1) John 8:11, *She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more."*
 - 2) Ezra 9:14, *shall we break your commandments again and intermarry with the peoples who practice these abominations? Would you not be angry with us until you consumed us, so that there should be no remnant, nor any to escape?*

 - b. Comments
 - 1) *Jesus found him* probably means that Jesus wanted to speak to the man again.
 - 2) He told the man to sin no more because the consequences would be more severe than what he had already experienced.
 - 3) Jesus was not identifying the man's illness as a specific consequence of sin, John 9:2-3.
 - 4) Grant Osborne, *Now that the man has been transformed physically, it is time to be transformed spiritually, to get right with God lest he face "something worse," divine judgment for sin.*
 - 5) Thomas Constable, *Jesus' point was that the man needed to regard his new health as an opportunity to make a new break with sin (cf. Gal. 5:13).*
 - 6) Edwin Blum, *The warning was that his tragic life of 38 years as an invalid was no comparison to the doom of hell. Jesus is interested not merely in healing a person's body. Far more important is the healing of his soul from sin.*
 - 7) Warren Wiersbe, *It is possible to experience an exciting miracle and still not be saved and go to heaven!*
 - 8) Charles Swindoll, *Apparently, John had heard Jesus warn many converts to "sin no more." Rejection of sin later became a predominant theme in John's theology, particularly in 1 John, where obedience is the cornerstone of genuine discipleship and the presence of sin casts doubt on one's salvation (1 John 2:1-2; 3:4-10).*

5. The beginning of Israel's rejection of Jesus (15-16), **The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had healed him. 16 And this was why the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because he was doing these things on the Sabbath.**
 - a. Related verses
 - 1) John 15:20, *Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours.*
 - 2) John 7:23, *If on the Sabbath a man receives circumcision, so that the law of Moses may not be broken, are you angry with me because on the Sabbath I made a man's whole body well?*
 - 3) John 9:16, *Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath." But others said, "How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?" And there was a division among them.*

 - b. Comments
 - 1) The man told the Jews that Jesus healed him.
 - a) Thomas Constable, *It seems that the man's motive for telling the authorities about Jesus was not to glorify Him. He knew that they wanted to find Jesus because they considered Him a lawbreaker. Clearly the ungrateful man wanted to save his own skin by implicating Jesus in what had happened.*
 - b) Charles Swindoll, *This man sought out the temple officials for the purpose of informing on Jesus.*
 - c) Grant Osborne, *Instead of repenting he goes and reports Jesus to the authorities. He is more interested in getting right with the Jewish leaders than he is in getting right with God.*

 - 2) The Jews persecuted Jesus because of His Sabbath ministry.
 - a) Thomas Constable, *Jesus could have waited until the next day to heal the man. And He could have healed him without drawing attention to Himself. He also could have healed him without telling him to carry his mat. Jesus did all of these things in order to create a public situation in which He revealed that He had the same nature, power, and authority as God the Father.*

- b) Edwin Blum, *His opponents in the controversy were progressively humiliated while the crowds favored Him. The opponents' response was to persecute Jesus by opposing Him and trying to kill Him (John 5:16, 18; 7:19, 25).*
- c) Leon Morris, *"Was doing" is a continuous tense, and John may imply that there were other Sabbath incidents that he had not recorded,*
- d) Warren Wiersbe, *Did the man "inform" on Jesus because of fear? We do not know. The Jewish leaders at least turned from him and aimed their accusations at Jesus Christ ... The Jewish leaders did not prosecute the man who was healed, even though he had broken the law; but they did begin to persecute the Lord Jesus. As the guardians of the faith, the members of the Jewish Sanhedrin (the religious ruling council) had the responsibility of investigating new preachers and teachers who appeared in the land, lest some false prophet come along and lead the people astray. They had looked into the ministry of John the Baptist (John 1:19ff) and more recently had been scrutinizing the ministry of Jesus.*
- e) F. F. Bruce, *Some commentators have denounced his action as ungrateful; others have thought his intention was to give credit where credit was due (as the blind man did in John 9:11). Our Evangelist throws no light on this question. He is not concerned with the man's state of mind but with the controversy to which his information gave rise ... Inciting others to break the law (as they understood it) was worse than breaking it oneself. Therefore they launched a campaign against Jesus which was not relaxed until his death some eighteen months later.*
- f) Grant Osborne, *This serious opposition will become commonplace in the rest of the Gospel, culminating in the cross.*

6. A commitment by the Jews to kill Jesus (17-18)

1) Related verses

- a) John 7:1, *After this Jesus went about in Galilee. He would not go about in Judea, because the Jews were seeking to kill him.*
- b) John 10:33, *The Jews answered him, "It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you but for blasphemy, because you, being a man, make yourself God."*
- c) John 5:16, *And this was why the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because he was doing these things on the Sabbath.*
- d) Romans 8:32, *He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?*

2) Comments

- a) Jesus demonstrated His equality with God the Father (17), ***But Jesus answered them, "My Father is working until now, and I am working."***
 - 1] Thomas Constable, *Jesus defended Himself by stating that He was doing God's work. The rabbis regarded God as working on the Sabbath by simply maintaining the universe and continuing to impart life. They did not accuse Him of violating the Sabbath ... Jesus claimed to be doing Himself what God was doing ("I Myself am working"). He described His work as coordinate with the Father's, not dependent on it. God did not suspend His activities on the Sabbath, and neither did Jesus ... This was a virtual claim to deity. Jesus was claiming that His relationship to the law was the same as God's, not the same as man's. Moreover, by speaking of God as "My Father," Jesus was claiming a relationship with Him that was unique from that of the Jews corporately.*
 - 2] Edwin Blum, *God rested on the seventh day (Gen. 2:2-3) from His work of Creation. But Jesus pointed to the continuous work of God as a justification for His Sabbath activity. God sustains the universe, begets life, and visits judgments ... The words My Father should be noted. Jesus did not say "your Father" or even "our Father." His opponents did not miss His claim to Deity.*
 - 3] Warren Wiersbe, *The Jewish leaders instantly understood His claim, and they changed their accusation from that of Sabbath-breaking to blasphemy, because Jesus claimed to be God. Liberal theologians who say that Jesus never claimed to be God have a difficult time with this passage.*
 - 4] Leon Morris, *Jesus points to the unceasing activity of the Father. Without him this whole created universe would cease. Unless he works continually no one could survive. And because of his close relationship with the Father Jesus works in the same way.*
 - 5] William Barclay, *God rested on the seventh day; but he rested from creation; his higher works of judgment and mercy and compassion and love still went on ... Jesus teaches that human need must always be helped; that there is no greater task than to relieve someone's pain and distress, and that the Christian's compassion must be like God's—unceasing.*
 - 6] Charles Swindoll, *Jesus responded to the religious leaders' false claim in two ways: first, by refuting their self-serving definition of "work," and then by claiming ownership of the Sabbath as God.*
 - 7] Grant Osborne, *He is claiming God as his Father in an exclusive sense, so to them this constitutes blasphemy.*

b) Religious leaders committed themselves to killing Jesus (18), *This was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.*

- 1] Thomas Constable, *To the contemporary western mind the idea of “son” connotes a different, independent person, but the ancient eastern mind thought of a son as the extension of his father. The word connoted identification with, rather than distinction from, the father ... Jesus was equal with God in His essence. Both the Father and the Son are deity. However, Jesus was not equal with the Father in the administrative order of the Trinity. The Son was subordinate to the Father in this respect.*
- 2] Edwin Blum, *The Sabbath controversy was enough to cause them to hate Jesus, but the implication of His claim that God is His own Father was impossible for them to accept. To them, God has no equals. Jesus’ claim, in their thinking, was a monstrous blasphemy.*
- 3] Leon Morris, *His claim meant that God was his Father in a special sense. He was claiming that he partook of the same nature as his Father. This involved equality. So the Jews held that he was guilty of blasphemy as well as of Sabbath breaking.*
- 4] Charles Swindoll, *His point was not lost on the religious authorities. They resented His challenging their illegitimate authority and they rejected His claim of equality with God. This kick-started their plot to kill Him.*
- 5] F. F. Bruce, *It was the fatal desire to be like God that had driven Adam from paradise and precipitated the son of the morning from heaven. Yet here was a man whose words and actions implied a trespass across the inviolable boundary that separated God from mankind. That such a man should be alive and at large constituted a danger to the community which tolerated him.*
- 6] Grant Osborne, *This is the first time John mentions the Jewish leaders’ intention to kill Jesus, but the expression all the more shows that they had decided earlier that Jesus must die. In the Synoptics this occurred near the beginning of Jesus’ ministry (in Mark 3:6 and parallels) after a series of encounters between Jesus and the leaders.*

SUMMARY

- Thomas Constable, *The emphasis in this section of the text is on Jesus being an extension of His Father, and on the legitimacy of His continuing His Father’s work, even on the Sabbath ... This is the second of seven incidents that the Gospel evangelists recorded in which Jesus came into conflict with the Jewish religious leaders over Sabbath observance.*
- R. Kent Hughes, *Jesus’ attitude toward and use of the Sabbath teaches us what to emphasize in our spiritual lives. Legalists do not celebrate—they observe. The Pharisees did not rejoice at the overflowing grace on that Sabbath day because something on their list was violated. The gospel for them was, “For God so loved the world that he gave a list, that whosoever might do the things on the list might have eternal life.” Jesus disagreed ... Our Lord is at Sabbath-rest, but he is working. And we are to be working and laboring for him. May these wonderful realities, the bounding joy, and the holy sense of celebration be ours and keep increasing, so that we will be a witness to the world, a balm to our own souls, and vehicles of glory to God.*
- Charles Swindoll, *The Word didn’t become flesh to establish a new religion. He became one of us to restore a broken relationship. He came to restore the true worship of God, which doesn’t presume to earn His blessing through good deeds but rejoices in the unmerited favor He delights to give. Unfortunately, the roots of pride run deep into our flesh; therefore, the ability to accept grace does not come naturally, only supernaturally.*

INTRODUCTION

- A. Outline of the *Gospel of John* (1:1-4:42)
1. Prologue (1:1-18)
 2. Preparation for Jesus' ministry (1:19-51)
 3. Jesus' early ministry (2:1-4:54)
 4. Rising opposition to Jesus' ministry (5:1-12:50)
 - a. Jesus' second visit to Jerusalem (5:1-47)
 - 1) Healing with conflict (5:1-18)
 - a) The third sign: healing the paralytic (5:1-9a)
 - b) Conflict with Jewish authorities (9b-18)
 - 2) Instruction concerning His Sonship (19-47)
 - a) Jesus' authority (19-29)
 - b) Witness support to His authority (30-47)

B. Context

- Leon Morris, *This is a passage of critical importance, the significance of which is not always realized.*
- Thomas Constable, *This is the most thoroughgoing statement of Jesus' unity with the Father, divine commission, authority, and proof of Messiahship in the Gospels. Jesus moved from clarifying His relationship to the Father, to explaining His function as the Judge of humanity, to citing the witnesses that established His claims.*
- John Ryle, *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.*

INSTRUCTION CONCERNING HIS SONSHIP, JOHN 5:19-47

- A. The Son's equality with the Father (19-29)
1. While on earth the Son does what the Father does (19-24)
 - a. The Son's dependence on the Father (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.***
 - 1) Related verses
 - a) John 5:30, *I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge, and my judgment is just, because I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me.*
 - b) John 16:13, *When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.*
 - 2) Comments
 - a) Thomas Constable, *He began by assuring the Jewish leaders that He was not claiming independence from the Father. He was definitely subordinate to Him, and He followed the Father's lead (cf. 4:34; 5:30; 8:28; 12:50; 15:10; Luke 5:17). Jesus described His relationship to the Father as similar to that of a son growing up in a household who learns a trade from his father while remaining submissive to him. The Son of God receives authority from the Father, obeys Him, and executes His will.*
 - b) Merrill Tenney, *Equality of nature, identity of objective, and subordination of will are interrelated in Christ. John presents him as the Son, not as the slave, of God, yet as the perfect agent of the divine purpose and the complete revelation of the divine nature.*
 - c) Edwin Blum, *Jesus explained that He is not independent of or in opposition to the Father. His activity is not self-initiated. The Father directs and has sent the Son. The Son's activity imitates the Father, and the Two always work together.*
 - d) F. F. Bruce, *Jesus is the Son in a unique sense, to be sure, but as the Son he maintains an attitude of perfect submission to the Father. It is for the Father to initiate; it is for the Son to obey. It is for the Father to show the Son what to do; it is for the Son to follow the Father's example.*
 - e) Leon Morris, *It is not simply that he does not act in independence of the Father; he cannot act in independence of the Father. He can do only the things he sees the Father doing. There is a continual contemplation of the Father by the Son, an uninterrupted communion ... But there is also a mighty claim, for the Son does "whatever the Father does." Neither the lowly obedience nor the implication of deity should be overlooked ... The implication is that the authority with which he teaches and acts is nothing*

less than the authority of God.

- f) Grant Osborne, *Note that the Son is at the same time both one with the Father in his nature and dependent on the Father in his action. There is a unity in being and at the same time a functional subordination between Father and Son.*
 - g) Charles Swindoll, *The Son is the perfect revelation of the Father here on earth in human form. Everything He does reflects the intentions and actions of the Father. Moreover, what the Father knows, the Son knows, because they are one being or “essence;” therefore, they share the same mind.*
 - h) William Barclay, *For Jesus to speak like this was an act of the most extraordinary and unique courage. He must have known well that to make claims like this would sound the sheerest blasphemy to the orthodox Jewish leaders and was to court death. Those who listened to words like this had only two alternatives—they must either accept Jesus as the Son of God or hate him as a blasphemer.*
- b. The Father’s love for the Son (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.***
- 1) Related verses
 - a) John 3:35, *The Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hand.*
 - b) John 15:9, *As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love.*
 - c) Matthew 3:17, *and behold, a voice from heaven said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.”*
 - d) John 14:12, *Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father.*
 - 2) Comments
 - a) *the Father loves the Son*
 - 1] Thomas Constable, *Jesus next clarified why He could do whatever the Father does. He could do so because the Father loves the Son (cf. 3:36). Because the Father loves the Son, the Father shows the Son all the things that the Father does ...*
 - 2] Edwin Blum, *The Son is in no way independent of or in rebellion against the Father. Their relationship is one of continuous love. The Son is not doing simply a part of God’s will; He has a full disclosure of all the Father’s works.*
 - 3] Leon Morris, *He acts only in accordance with the divine revelation.*
 - 4] Grant Osborne, *All Jesus does is anchored in the love of the Father, and love is the binding force of the unity of the Godhead in the Trinity. The present tense of “loves” and “shows” demonstrates the ongoing love between the two. The sharing is absolute; nothing is held back. The previous verse stresses that the Son “sees” the Father, and here the flip side is found, as the Father “shows” everything to the Son. This reciprocal knowledge is grounded in reciprocal love, and here we are told the basis of the omniscience Jesus has frequently possessed (1:42, 47–48; 4:18; 5:6), as all truth and knowledge is available to Jesus from the Father.*
 - b) *greater works than these ... your may marvel*
 - 1] Thomas Constable, *The greater works than these (i.e., the healing of a paralytic and commanding him to carry his mat on the Sabbath) that the Father will show the Son include giving life to the dead (v. 21) and pronouncing final judgment (v. 22). Part of the purpose of these greater works was to face His critics with His divine authority so that they would consider His claims.*
 - 2] Edwin Blum, *By the Father, the Son will do even more amazing works than physical healings.*
 - 3] Leon Morris, *... he looks forward to doing greater works, for he will be shown greater works. The result will be that his hearers will be astonished.*
 - 4] F. F. Bruce, *If what he has done already has taken them by surprise, what they have yet to see will give them real cause for wonder.*
 - 5] Grant Osborne, *... this revelation of the Father to the Son and through the Son to us will enable the Son to perform “even greater works than these,” meaning greater even than the sign-miracles like the healing of the lame man. This most likely points to the next two verses, describing how the Father gives to the Son authority over life and judgment ... This shocked wonder they feel is a first step toward faith, the result of encountering God in Jesus as the Son makes known the Father in himself (see 1:18).*

c. The Son has authority to give life to the dead (21), ***For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will.***

1) Related verses

- a) 2 Corinthians 1:9, *Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead.*
- b) Romans 8:11, *If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.*
- c) John 6:33, *For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.*
- d) John 11:25, *Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live,*
- e) Romans 9:18, *So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills.*

2) Comments

- a) Thomas Constable, *The fact that the Father discloses everything He does to the Son, and the Son does whatever the Father does, is clearly proven by the Son's giving life to the dead. The Jews acknowledged that only God could raise the dead (2 Kings 5:7; Ezek. 37:13). This involves overcoming the forces of sin and death. Jesus claimed that authority now, and He demonstrated it later (11:41–44).*
- b) Edwin Blum, *The Son gives life to whom He is pleased to give it, just as He chose to heal one man out of a crowd of disabled people. The giving of life includes spiritual (eternal) life and a resurrected body. The resuscitation of Lazarus (chap. 11) would illustrate both.*
- c) Warren Wiersbe, *For Jesus to claim to have power to raise the dead was a blasphemous thing in the eyes of the Jewish leaders; they gave that power to God alone. They said that Jehovah held the three great keys: the key to open the heavens and give rain (Deut. 28:12); the key to open the womb and give conception (Gen. 30:22); and the key to open the grave and raise the dead (Ezek. 37:13). As far as the Gospel records are concerned, Jesus had not yet raised anyone from the dead; so to make this claim was to invite even more opposition.*
- d) Charles Swindoll, *In order to be able to give life, you must be the source of life. This would be an outrageous claim for any mere human. Doctors can give medicine or administer treatment in order to delay death, but they cannot give life to a dead body. God had used prophets in the Old Testament to raise the dead, but none dared claim credit. Only God can create something from nothing and then fill it with life.*
- e) F. F. Bruce, *It is not only that eternal life is granted to those who believe in him (cf. John 3:15, 16, 36), but it is that he exercises the divine prerogative of imparting this life.*
- f) Grant Osborne, *Jesus, with the Father, is sovereign over life—including the ability to grant eternal life now and final resurrection later.*

d. The Son has authority to judge and to receive honor (22), ***For the Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son,***

1) Related verses

- a) Acts 17:31, *because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.*
- b) John 5:27, *And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man.*
- c) John 9:39, *Jesus said, "For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind."*
- d) Acts 10:42, *And he commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead.*
- e) John 17:2, *since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him.*

2) Comments

- a) Thomas Constable, *The roles of the Father and the Son are parallel in verse 21, but there is a distinction between them in this verse. The Father and the Son both give life, but the Father has committed all judgment to the Son (cf. Acts 17:31).*
- b) Leon Morris, *This was something new to Jews. They held that the Father was the Judge of all people [cf. Gen. 18:25], and they expected to stand before him at the last day.*
- c) Warren Wiersbe, *To the orthodox Jew, Jehovah God was "the Judge of all the earth" (Gen. 18:25); and no one dared to apply that august title to himself. But Jesus did! By claiming to be the Judge, He claimed to be God. "Because He [God] hath appointed a day in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained" (Acts 17:31).*

- d) Gant Osborne, ... according to Revelation 20:11–15 God is on the throne of judgment. So this means Jesus shares that authority with his Father ... There is a seeming contradiction with 3:17, in which the evangelist says Jesus was not sent “to condemn [krino, judge] the world.” Yet here, in 5:30 and 9:39 it says he came to judge. The solution is in 8:15–16, in which Jesus states, “I pass judgment on no one. But if I do judge, my decisions are true.” Jesus did not enter this world to judge, but he encounters every person, and to those who reject his offer, he becomes judge.
- e) William Barclay, John says that God committed the whole process of judgment to Jesus Christ. What he means is this—our judgment depends on our reaction to Jesus. If we find in Jesus the one person to be loved and followed, we are on the way to life. If we see in Jesus an enemy, we have condemned ourselves. Jesus is the touchstone by which all are tested; reaction to him is the test by which all are divided.
- e. The Son is worthy of the same honor as the Father (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.**
- 1) Related verses
- a) John 8:49, Jesus answered, “I do not have a demon, but I honor my Father, and you dishonor me.
- b) Luke 10:16, “The one who hears you hears me, and the one who rejects you rejects me, and the one who rejects me rejects him who sent me.”
- c) Philippians 2:9-11, Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.
- 2) Comments
- a) Thomas Constable, *The reason that the Father has delegated judging to the Son is so that all may honor the Son as they honor the Father. Subordination usually results in less honor. The Father has guaranteed that the Son will receive equal honor with Himself by committing the role of judging entirely to Him.*
- b) Edwin Blum, *Jesus’ unity with His Father is so complete that the honor of God is tied to Jesus. To reject or dishonor God the Son is to reject and dishonor God the Father.*
- c) Warren Wiersbe, *What a tremendous claim: if you do not honor the Son, you are not honoring the Father! The “religious” people who say that they worship God, but who deny the deity of Christ, have neither the Father nor the Son! Apart from Jesus Christ, we cannot know the Father, worship the Father, or serve the Father.*
- d) Leon Morris, *The whole stress of this present passage is on the unity of the Father and the Son. What is done to one is done also to the other. The inherent dignity of the Son and his intimate relationship to the Father make the dishonoring of him a very serious matter indeed.*
- e) Grant Osborne, *This is a major facet of John’s theology as reflected in Jesus’ teaching: one cannot believe or honor God without believing and honoring Jesus (5:38, 43–44; 7:16–27; 8:19, 28, 42, 47; 10:38; 14:1), and the Son is the only path to God (14:6). Those Jews who thought they could be God’s people while they rejected Jesus were utterly mistaken. Jesus is the Sent One, the envoy of God, and as such he is both the revealer of the Father and the recipient of the Father’s honor. There is no other way to God (14:6).*
- f) Archibald Robertson, *There is small comfort here for those who praise Jesus as teacher and yet deny his claims to worship.*
- f. Eternal life is for those who believe the Son (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.**
- 1) Related verses
- a) John 8:51, *Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death.*
- b) John 20:31, *but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*
- c) John 3:15, *that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.*
- d) John 3:36, *Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.*
- e) 1 John 3:14, *We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death.*

2) Comments

- a) Thomas Constable, *Jesus proceeded from talking about His relation to the Father to explaining His relation to people. He developed one idea from the preceding argument more fully. He introduced it with a solemn affirmation. Jesus had just said that He gave life to whomever He pleased (v. 21). He now described these people as those who hear His Word and believe the Father ("Him who sent Me"). They will not experience condemning judgment (cf. 3:18; Rom. 6:14; 8:1), but they begin already to experience eternal life (cf. 3:36; Eph. 2:1, 5) ... The Son represents the Father to humankind, so when we place faith in the Son, we are placing it in the Father as well.*
- b) B. F. Westcott, *The two conditions of eternal life are (1) knowledge of the revelation made by the Son, and (2) belief in the truth of it, that is, belief in the word of the Father who speaks through the Son.*
- c) Leon Morris, *Anyone who hears and believes has eternal life. But the words also constitute an invitation, a challenge. They are a call to hear Christ and to take the step of faith.*
- d) Edwin Blum, *Since Jesus has the unity and divine prerogatives mentioned in verses 19–23, to trust His message and His Father is to have in the present time eternal life (cf. 3:36). No judgment will come in the future (he will not be condemned [cf. 3:18; Rom. 6:13; 8:1] because he has already passed from one realm—death—into another—life [cf. Eph. 2:1, 5]). Only once elsewhere (in 1 John 3:14) is the phrase "passed from death to life" used.*
- e) Charles Swindoll, *Usually, Jesus called for belief in Himself (3:16); in this case, He called for belief in the Father to reinforce the theme of complete unity of Father and Son. To believe in one is to believe in the other, because the two persons are one.*
- f) William Barclay, *Jesus says quite simply that to accept him is life; and to reject him is death. What does it mean to listen to Jesus' word and to believe in the Father who sent him? ... To put it at its briefest, it means three things. (1) It means to believe that God is as Jesus says he is; that he is love; and so to enter into a new relationship with him in which fear is banished. (2) It means to accept the way of life that Jesus offers us, however difficult it may be and whatever sacrifices it may involve, certain that to accept it is the ultimate way to peace and to happiness, and to refuse it the ultimate way to death and judgment. (3) It means to accept the help that the risen Christ gives and the guidance that the Holy Spirit offers, and so to find strength for all that the way of Christ involves.*
- g) Grant Osborne, *Hearing in John is the preliminary step to believing, and true hearing demands response. In both Hebrew and Greek the verb for hearing connotes obeying; we have not listened until we have responded. At the same time, when we hear Jesus we also hear the Father. Conversion is a trinitarian act and results in eternal life bestowed by the Triune Godhead.*

2. The Son will return and give life and pronounce judgment (25-29)

a. The Son has authority to grant eternal life (25-26)

1) Related verses

- a) John 4:23 *But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him.*
- b) Ephesians 2:5, *even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—*

2) Comments

- a) All who hear the voice of the Son will live (25), ***Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live.***
 - 1] Thomas Constable, *Jesus continued to describe what believers will experience in the future fully, which they already experience now partially (cf. 4:23), namely, resurrection life. They will experience it in the future physically, but they experience it now spiritually (i.e., in the spiritual realm; cf. Rom. 6:13).*
 - 2] Edwin Blum, *Jesus' life-giving power can call a person out of the grave (11:43), everyone from their tombs (5:28–29), or anyone in spiritual death (v. 24) to eternal life.*
 - 3] Leon Morris, *Our eternal destiny is determined by our attitude to him ... Hear," of course, means "hear with appreciation," "take heed."*
 - 4] John Hart, *The dead who hear the voice of the Son of God and live are spiritually dead nonbelievers (Eph 2:1, 5; Col 2:13) who come to faith (hear, v. 25) and receive eternal life now. They, and those who have believed and who have died, will participate in the future resurrection ...*

- 5] F. F. Bruce, *When he comes and speaks his life-giving word, those who hear it are raised from spiritual death. In him the invitation once given through a Hebrew prophet acquires fresh fulness of meaning: "Incline your ear, and come to me; hear, that your soul may live" (Isaiah 55:3). And should it be asked how the dead can be expected to hear, another Hebrew prophet will help us to answer the question. When Ezekiel was commanded to prophesy to the most unpromising congregation that ever a preacher faced, "O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord" (Ezekiel 37:4), it was the breath of God entering into them that enabled them to respond. It is the same Spirit who now enables the spiritually dead to hear the voice of the Son of God and enter into life.*
- 6] Grant Osborne, *There is an already/not yet tension in the phrase "a time is coming and has now come," repeating 4:23. The final kingdom age has now arrived in Christ, a time "when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live" ... Apart from Christ, all people already constitute "the dead" in sin, and the only hope is the life-giving word of Christ who is the Word (1:1–18; 6:63, 6:68; 10:3, 16, 27; 11:43). The life of final resurrection is available in the here and now for those who listen and come to faith.*
- b) The Son has life in Himself (26), ***For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself.***
- 1] Related verses
- a] John 1:4, *In him was life, and the life was the light of men.*
- b] John 6:57, *As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me.*
- c] John 17:2, *since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him.*
- d] 1 John 5:11, *And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.*
- 2] Comments
- a] Thomas Constable, *This verse explains why Jesus can do these things. He can do them because He has life resident within Himself. He is self-existent, whereas humans must receive their life from Him: the source of life. The Father gave the Son life (cf. v. 22; 1:4). That is, the Father delegated it to Him, just as He delegated judgment to Him. The Son can give life to others because the Father gave Him the authority to do so.*
- b] Grant Osborne, *It is the Father who "has life in himself," meaning he is the source and the repository of all life (so Gen 2:7; Deut 30:20; Job 33:4; Ps 16:11). The life the Son possesses stems from the Father, who "grants the Son also to have life in himself." This transcends life-giving power. The Father and Son possess life; it is integral to their being and inherent in who they are.*
- c] Warren Wiersbe, *Our life is derived, but His life is original, "in Himself." "In Him was life" (John 1:4). The grave could not hold Him because He is "the Prince of Life" (Acts 2:24; 3:15). Jesus laid down His life and then took it up again (John 10:17–18). Because He has life in Himself, He can share that life with all who will trust Him.*
- d] Leon Morris, *The Old Testament makes it clear that life derives from the Father. It is he who breathes life into people (Gen. 2:7), and life is always thought of as his gift (Job 10:12; 33:4). With him is "the fountain of life" (Ps. 36:9). It is he who shows people "the path of life" (Ps. 16:11) and who "has preserved our lives" (Ps. 66:9). Moses can go so far as to say, "the LORD is your life" (Deut. 30:20), and similarly the Psalmist says, "The LORD is the stronghold of my life" (Ps. 27:1), and he makes his prayer "to the God of my life" (Ps. 42:8). Jesus' words must be understood against this background ... To him it is given to have the same kind of life within himself as that which the Father has within himself.*
- e] F. F. Bruce, *Nor is the Father's bestowal of life-in-himself on the Son something which began with his ministry on earth, or with the Incarnation. Rather it is an eternal act, part and parcel of the unique Father-Son relationship which existed already "in the beginning."*

b. The Son has authority to judge (27-29)

1) Jesus has authority because He is the Son of Man (27), ***And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man.***

a) Related verse , John 5:22, *For the Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son,*

b) Comments

- 1] Thomas Constable, *Similarly, God has given the Son authority to judge* (vv. 21–22). *Jesus revealed an additional reason for this here. It is because Jesus is the Son of Man (Dan. 7:13–14). He is the Anointed One whom God has sent, but He is also fully human—the only perfect Man who can represent mankind before God. Jesus can judge humanity because He belongs to humanity and understands it (cf. Heb. 2:17). The absence of a definite article before the title stresses the quality of Jesus as “Son of Man” (cf. Heb. 1:2).*
 - 2] Warren Wiersbe, *The title “Son of man” used in John 5:27 refers to Daniel 7:13–14 and is a definite messianic title. It is used twelve times in John’s Gospel and over eighty times in all four Gospels. The Jews would know this title from their reading of the Book of Daniel; and they would know that, by using it, Jesus was claiming to be the Messiah, and the Judge.*
 - 3] Leon Morris, *This is Jesus’ favorite self-designation and, moreover, it gives an excellent reason for judgment being committed to him. He is the heavenly figure to whom is given “authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed” (Dan. 7:14).*
 - 4] F. F. Bruce, *In Daniel’s vision of the final judgment it is to “one like a son of man” that universal and everlasting dominion is given by the Ancient of Days (Daniel 7:13 f.). It is this Old Testament passage more than any other that lies behind Jesus’ use of the designation “the Son of Man”—although here as elsewhere he transcends and transforms the Old Testament foreshadowing by his interpretation and fulfillment of it.*
 - 5] Grant Osborne, *The title first appeared at 1:51 and is apocalyptic in force, echoing Daniel 7:13–14, where the Son of Man is a glorified figure who is given dominion over this world. As the God-man, Sovereign over creation and the glorified Word of God, he has the power and right to judge.*
- 2) Jesus has the power to give life or judgment at the resurrection (28-29), ***Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice 29 and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.***

a) Related verses

- 1] John 5:25, *“Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live.*
- 2] John 11:24, *Martha said to him, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.”*
- 3] 1 Corinthians 15:52, *in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.*

b) Comments

- 1] Thomas Constable, *Jesus urged His hearers not to marvel that it would be His voice that would summon the dead eventually (cf. 11:43). All the dead will hear the Son of Man’s voice in the future, calling them forth to judgment. Believers are those who do good, which in this context means believing on the Son (6:29; cf. 3:21). Theirs will be a resurrection resulting in eternal life. Those who do evil, by not believing on the Son (3:36; cf. 3:19), will experience eternal condemnation following their resurrection.*
- 2] Edwin Blum, *This universal resurrection is clearly taught in Daniel 12:1–2. Other passages show that the resurrection to life, “the first resurrection,” will occur in stages (the church at the Rapture, and Tribulation saints at the Lord’s second coming at the end of the Tribulation), and that the resurrection of those who will be condemned will occur at the end of the Millennium (Rev. 20:11–15).*
- 3] Leon Morris, *At the consummation of the age the voice of the Son will usher in the resurrection. All the dead will rise. Judgment, as always in Scripture, is on the basis of works. It is “those who have done good” who will “rise to live” (cf. 6:39–40), while “those who have done evil” rise only “to be condemned” (see on 3:17–18). This does not mean that salvation is on the basis of good works, for this very Gospel makes it plain over and over again that people enter eternal life when they believe in Jesus Christ. But the lives they live form the test of the faith they profess.*

- 4] John Hart, *In this passage, all Christians are considered to be those who did the good deeds (v. 29), namely, they exercised faith in Jesus (see the contrast between believing and disobeying in 3:36), and they will go to a resurrection of life. But all who fail to believe are also viewed from the perspective of eternity. Even though those who reject Christ may do many commendable things, those deeds are not oriented toward the glory of God and are not done in the power of the Holy Spirit. Those who do not embrace Christ are viewed as those who committed the evil deeds and go to a resurrection of judgment.*
- 5] F. F. Bruce, *The raising of men and women from spiritual death to life in Christ during this age anticipates the bodily resurrection at the end of the age. There is a close connection between the two resurrections. The fact that here and now the dead come to life as they hear the voice of the Son of God is the guarantee that his voice will raise the dead at the last day. This twofold aspect of resurrection is mentioned again in John 6:40, 54, where Jesus, in his Capernaum discourse on the bread of life, insists that it is those who have eternal life through faith in him who will be raised by him at the last day ... when the day of final separation comes, and life or condemnation is apportioned to men, there will be nothing arbitrary about the judicial decision. That decision will simply be the ratification of a decision made in this life.*

B. Witness support of Jesus' authority(30-47)

1. Transitional verse (30), ***I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge, and my judgment is just, because I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me.***

a. Related verses

- 1) John 5:19, *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.*
- 2) John 6:38, *For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me.*
- 3) John 8:28, *So Jesus said to them, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me.*
- 4) John 14:10, *Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works.*

b. Comments

- 1) Thomas Constable, *It concludes Jesus' explanation of the Son's equality with the Father (vv. 19–29), and it introduces His clarification of the Father's testimony about the Son (vv. 31–47).*
- 2) Edwin Blum, *The section ends the way it began, with the point that the Son can do nothing apart from the Father (cf. v. 19). His judgment, as everything He does, is from the express will of the Father. He is the perfect Spokesman for the Father and His effective Executive. Jesus' will is to do the Father's will (cf. 4:34; 8:29), which shows that He has the same nature.*
- 3) Leon Morris, *In the present context the activity being discussed is judging. So Jesus says that his judgment is "just" (or "righteous"; the same Greek word does duty for both meanings). He is always in touch with the Father. His perfect obedience means that his judgment is divine.*
- 4) Louis Barbieri, *If Jesus judges only on what He hears from the Father, His judgment will be just (righteous) since God is just.*
- 5) William Barclay, *The claim of Jesus to judge is based on the claim that in him is the perfect mind of God. He does not judge with the inevitable mixture of human motives; he judges with the perfect holiness, the perfect love and the perfect sympathy of God.*
- 6) Grant Osborne, *In verses 19–20 he sees the Father; here he hears the Father. So he doubly submits to the Father's will. Therefore all his judgments are completely righteous and just ... These are the Father's decisions, the result of God's will and voice passed on to his Son. Jesus is the divine herald and envoy and does not act on his own.*
- 7) Merrill Tenney, *The magnitude of Jesus' claims called for substantiation. Five witnesses were introduced by Jesus to validate His statements.*
- 8) Leon Morris, *Witness is borne to him by (i) the Father (vv. 32, 37); (ii) the Baptist (v. 33); (iii) his works (v. 36); (iv) Scripture (v. 39); and (v) Moses (v. 46).*

2. Witness to the Son (31-40)

- a. The Father's testimony (31-32), ***If I alone bear witness about myself, my testimony is not true. 32 There is another who bears witness about me, and I know that the testimony that he bears about me is true.***
- 1) Related verses
 - a) John 8:13, *So the Pharisees said to him, "You are bearing witness about yourself; your testimony is not true.*
 - b) John 8:14, *Jesus answered, "Even if I do bear witness about myself, my testimony is true, for I know where I came from and where I am going, but you do not know where I come from or where I am going.*
 - c) John 8:18, *I am the one who bears witness about myself, and the Father who sent me bears witness about me.*
 - 2) Comments
 - a) *If I alone bear witness ...*
 - 1] Thomas Constable, *Jesus did not mean that if He said anything about Himself it must be false, though apparently some of the Jews thought He meant that (cf. 8:13). He meant that the truthfulness of His claims about Himself did not rest on His own testimony exclusively.*
 - 2] Edwin Blum, *In 5:31, Jesus' point was that if He bore witness to Himself, this witness would not be accepted by the Jewish authorities. They would see it as an arrogant claim of self-exaltation. Yet in another setting (8:14), self-authentication is perfectly valid because an individual is the only one who knows his own full experience.*
 - 3] Kenneth Gangel, *Jesus admitted that if his own words represented all he could bring to the witness stand, his accusers would have every reason for their doubt and scorn. Nevertheless, any accused man might speak in his own defense if he wished.*
 - 4] Leon Morris, *Jesus points to the impossibility of anyone's being accepted on the basis of his own word. Witness to anyone must always be borne by someone else; the law demands two or three witnesses (Deut. 19:15).*
 - 5] Grant Osborne, *... Jesus is not saying his self-witness is wrong, only that in a legal sense it is insufficient.*
 - b) *There is another who bears witness about me ...*
 - 1] Thomas Constable, *The "another" that bore witness about Jesus was the Father. Jesus was not speaking of the Father's witness as essentially different from His own witness. He viewed His own witness as simply an extension of the Father's witness, since He always faithfully represented the Father's will.*
 - 2] Edwin Blum, *Jesus affirmed that He did not seek an independent self-authentication. He was content to submit to the Father's will and to let the Father authenticate Him.*
 - 3] Kenneth Gangel, *This mention of the Father at the beginning of the testimony list indicates that Jesus believed all his words and actions were already approved and did not need any further word. As Tasker puts it, the Father "is the only witness in fact whom Jesus regards as important as far as His own vindication is concerned..."*
 - 4] Leon Morris, *Independent confirmation is required. And that independent confirmation is available. Jesus does not name that Other who bears witness, but it is plain enough that he is referring to the Father ... The Father bears witness to him. The witness of the Father may not be acceptable to the Jews; it may not even be recognized by them. But it is enough for Jesus. He knows that this witness is "true."*
 - 5] Grant Osborne, *It is interesting that Jesus does not name that "other witness." Virtually everyone agrees this must be the Father himself, but he is not named until verse 37, probably because Jesus believes this "other" voice is behind all four sets of witnesses in 5:33-39. All are variations of the Father's witness.*
- b. John the Baptist (33-35), ***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.***
- 1) Related verses
 - a) John 1:7, *He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him.*
 - b) John 1:19, *And this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?"*

- c) 1 John 5:9, *If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater, for this is the testimony of God that he has borne concerning his Son.*
- d) 2 Peter 1:19, *So we have the prophetic message more fully confirmed. You will do well to be attentive to this as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.*

2) Comments

a) *You sent to John ...*

- 1] Thomas Constable, *Jesus knew that His critics would not accept the Father's witness to His identity, even though Jesus claimed that His words accurately represented the Father's will. He could not prove this claim to their satisfaction. Therefore He cited another human witness who testified about Jesus' identity, namely, John the Baptist. John came into the world to bear witness to the light (1:7). Accordingly, he had borne witness about Jesus to the Jews who had come from Jerusalem to ask who He was (1:19–28). Furthermore, he had identified Jesus publicly as the Lamb of God (1:29–34). John had truly testified to the truth that Jesus was the divine Messiah (cf. 1:40–41).*
- 2] Kenneth Gangel, *The Greek grammar implies that John the Baptist was the Jews' own witness, a prophet highly regarded by those who now challenged Jesus' authority.*
- 3] Grant Osborne, *With the words "you have sent to John," Jesus refers to that earlier Sanhedrin-sent investigation recorded in 1:19–28, when priests and Levites interrogated John the Baptist. Jesus' point is that "he has testified to the truth" in his witness of 1:23 that he was tasked by God to "make straight the way for the Lord" (from Isa 40:3), that he was "unworthy" even to loose Jesus' sandals in 1:27, and that Jesus is "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" in 1:29 and "God's Chosen One" in 1:34. Later, in 3:27–30 the Baptist said that he rejoiced at the privilege of preparing for the Messiah, Jesus.*
- 4] Charles Swindoll, *Earlier, the religious authorities sought out John the Baptizer because his widespread ministry caused Jews to begin looking for the Messiah. He had such a profound impact that few doubted his status as a genuine prophet of God (Matt. 14:5; 21:26; Mark 11:32; Luke 20:6).*
- 5] Leon Morris, *A witness had been given to them that they could understand and appreciate. They had even regarded him highly. But they had not in the end accepted his witness to Jesus ... John's words were not spoken into empty air and forgotten. He bore his witness and it continued ...*

b) *Not that the testimony that I receive is from man ...*

- 1] Thomas Constable, *However, Jesus did not need, and did not accept, human testimony in order to establish His identity in His own mind. The only witness He needed was the Father's witness. He simply mentioned John the Baptist's witness in order to establish His identity in His hearers' minds—so that they might believe on Him and obtain salvation.*
- 2] Kenneth Gangel, *Human testimony should not be necessary, but since they obviously considered it important, we start with a lamp that burned and gave light.*
- 3] Leon Morris, *Now comes a little aside in which Jesus explains his reason for referring to John's witness. It is not because he himself bases his position on it ... His purpose in referring to John, then, is not to adduce further confirmation of what he already knows from God. It is to direct the attention of his hearers to that which might put them on the right way. John's witness, if heeded, could start them out on the path that leads to salvation. This had, in fact, happened to some of the Twelve. They had been numbered among John's followers, but had left him to follow Jesus, in accordance with John's own witness (cf. 1:35–37).*
- 4] Grant Osborne, *Jesus clarifies that he himself does not "accept human testimony" in order to anchor his own self-awareness. Neither he nor the Father needs human confirmation to establish their identity. They are "from above" rather than of earth and exist at a higher plane. He and the Father are one (5:17, 19; 10:30), and so he has power over life and judgment.*

c) *He was a burning and shining lamp ...*

- 1] Thomas Constable, *Evidently John's public ministry had ended by this time, since Jesus spoke of his witness as past. John was not the true light (Gr. phos, 1:8–9), but he was a lamp (Gr. lychnos) that bore witness (cf. Ps. 132:17; 2 Cor. 4:6–7). John's ministry had caused considerable messianic excitement. Unfortunately most of John's hearers only chose to follow his teaching temporarily (2:23–25).*
- 2] Edwin Blum, *John was only a lamp, not the true Light (1:9). The Jewish nation for a short time was stirred by and rejoiced in his ministry. For a moment they thought the Messianic Age was dawning. Even though his preaching had some stinging rebukes, there was a great popular excitement about his message.*

- 3] Kenneth Gangel, *Our first thought here tends to focus on light. This is no doubt an important component of the metaphor. But the word burned may suggest a candle or torch that burned itself out. Devout Jews were happy to see their Elijah, delighted at his message of a coming Messiah. But they cared nothing for what he delivered.*
 - 4] Leon Morris, *The Jews never did take John seriously. They never came to grips with his message. John was steadily, unflickeringly, pointing the way in his stern call to seriousness of purpose. And these Jews, who professed to be the people of God and to be seeking the way of God, just as steadily ignored his essential message.*
 - 5] Louis Barbieri, *John was a lamp, fulfilling the prophecy of the “lamp” that was to prepare for the Messiah (Ps. 132:17). While he was preaching (shining), the Jewish people were willing to rejoice for a while, hoping he would bring in a messianic ruler who would establish the kingdom and overthrow Rome.*
 - 6] William Barclay, *In paying tribute to John, Jesus rebukes the Jews. They were pleased to take pleasure in John for a time, but they never really took him seriously. They were, as one has put it, like ‘gnats dancing in the sunlight’, or like children playing while the sun shone. John was a pleasant diversion, to be listened to as long as he said the things they liked, and to be abandoned whenever he became awkward.*
 - 7] Charles Swindoll, *He was the lamp, not the light. He was the forerunner, not the Christ. John completed His mission by introducing the Messiah and then stepped aside. But Jesus was not the Messiah Israel wanted. He came to establish a different kind of kingdom, not one that would raise an army, overthrow Rome, conquer the world, and usher Israel into a new golden age of power and prosperity. At least not yet.*
 - 8] Grant Osborne, *Their excitement was quite short-lived and did not meet John’s true purpose of producing faith in Jesus as the Messiah.*
 - 9] F. F. Bruce, *... here was the Light of the world himself, with greater accreditation than even John could supply.*
- c. Jesus’ works (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.***
- 1) Related verses
 - a) John 10:25, *Jesus answered them, “I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father’s name bear witness about me,*
 - b) John 10:38, *but if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father.*
 - c) John 14:11, *but if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father.*
 - d) John 15:24, *If I had not done among them the works that no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin, but now they have seen and hated both me and my Father.*
 - e) John 4:34, *Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work.*
 - f) John 3:17, *For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.*
 - 2) Comments
 - a) Thomas Constable, *Jesus had weightier evidence for His identity than John’s witness. It came from His Father, and it took several forms. The first of these forms was the works (Gr. erga) that Jesus performed (cf. 10:25; 14:11). These works included all of Jesus’ activities: His miracles, His life of perfect obedience, and His work of redemption on the cross.*
 - b) Warren Wiersbe, *You will remember that John selected seven of these “signs” to include in his Gospel as proof that Jesus is the Son of God (John 20:30–31). Jesus made it clear that His works were the works of the Father (John 5:17–20; 14:10). Even Nicodemus had to admit that our Lord’s miracles identified Him as “sent from God” (John 3:2).*
 - c) Leon Morris, *The works that he does are not ordinary works. They are “what no one else did” (15:24). They are the Father’s works, and, indeed, it is the Father abiding in him who does them (14:10). These works bear upon them the hallmark of their divine origin. They show that Jesus is not of human origin, but that the Father has sent him (for “sent” see on 3:17). Jesus’ words have particular force, set as they are in the context of the healing of the lame man. Before the very eyes of the Jews there was evidence of divine power. And they rejected it!*

- d) William Barclay, *He says it is not the human evidence of any fallible person he is going to produce to support his claims ... So he produces the witness of his works. He had done that when John sent from prison to ask if he was the Messiah. He had told John's inquiring envoys to go back and tell him what they saw happening (Matthew 11:4; Luke 7:22). But Jesus cites his works, not to point to himself but to point to the power of God working in him and through him. His supreme witness is God.*
- e) Charles Swindoll, *These miracles do not establish His deity by themselves; other mere mortals have been the means by which God accomplished supernatural "works." Miracles, however, had long been accepted as God's stamp of approval on the miracle-worker's message. Jesus' signs authenticated His message: "I am equal with the Father." Furthermore, the miracles were consistent with the character and plans of God.*
- f) F. F. Bruce, *One of the ways in which the Father testified to the Son was in the works which he gave the Son to do (cf. verses 19, 20). By doing these works, Jesus showed himself to be the Son of God. These works were summed up in the achievement of the world's salvation, the prime purpose of his coming into the world (cf. John 3:17) ... The Father, by giving him these works to do, and the Son, by doing them, provided an assurance which was doubly sure.*
- g) Merrill Tenney, *"Works," as used in the Fourth Gospel, always refer to action as illustrative of character. In particular, the word means the miracles which are outstanding in importance and samples of divine power. As already noted, they were selected to portray all aspects of the divine power of Jesus, and to establish His claims as the Son of God.*
- d. The Father's prophecy (37-38), ***And the Father who sent me has himself borne witness about me. His voice you have never heard, his form you have never seen, 38 and you do not have his word abiding in you, for you do not believe the one whom he has sent.***
- 1) Related verses
- a) John 8:18, *I am the one who bears witness about myself, and the Father who sent me bears witness about me.*
- b) Matthew 3:17, *and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."*
- c) John 1:18, *No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.*
- d) 1 John 4:13, *By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit.*
- 2) Comments
- a) Leon Morris, *The entire revelation of the Father from the very beginning has prepared the way for the coming of the Son. Rightly understood it bears witness to him. This is the witness that means so much to Jesus. Because he has the witness of God he is not troubled by the opposition of people. But though this witness is so clear and so valuable to him, he does not anticipate that the Jews will respond to it. Their ignorance is threefold. (i) They have never heard God's voice ... (ii) They have never seen God's form ... (iii) They do not have God's word abiding in them ... From all this we see that the Father's witness is accessible only to those who believe on the Son.*
- b) Edwin Blum, *... when and how did or does the Father give this witness? The possibilities include: (1) at Jesus' baptism (Matt. 3:17), (2) at the transfiguration (Matt. 17:5), (3) at the Triumphal Entry (John 12:28), (4) in Jesus' works (3:2), (5) in people's minds or hearts (6:45). Most likely Jesus was referring to the inner work of God in which He impresses on people's consciences that Jesus is the Truth (6:45; 1 John 5:9-12). Jesus' opponents are ignorant of God ... This message had not been received by them (does not dwell [menonta, from meno, "remain, abide"]) in them) because they had rejected Jesus.*
- c) Kenneth Gangel, *The idea of a universal fatherhood of God applies only to creation and humanity. When it comes to spiritual sonship, the issue is personal faith. Note how the rejection of Jesus is a "catch twenty-two" kind of problem. These denying Jews never grasped the Father's testimony about Jesus because they refused Jesus' testimony about the Father.*
- d) Louis Barbieri, *The Father had testified in the OT Scriptures (cf. v. 39), by a voice from heaven at the baptism of Jesus (Mt 3:17; Mk 1:11), and by the descent of the Spirit like a dove on Christ (Jn 1:32-33). Yet these Jewish leaders (vv. 16, 18) had neither heard His voice spiritually at any time nor seen His form (i.e., nature) by faith, as proven in their failure to believe in the Son (v. 38).*
- e) William Barclay, *The early part of this section may be taken in two ways ... (1) It may be that it refers to the unseen witness of God in the heart of every individual. In his First Letter, John writes: 'Those who believe in the Son of God have the testimony [of God] in their hearts' (1 John 5:10) ... (2) It may be that John is really meaning that God's witness to Christ is to be found in the Scriptures.*

- f) F. F. Bruce, *God had sent his word to the people of Israel “in many and various ways” (Hebrews 1:1); but had they accepted it? Those at any rate who were now being addressed showed that they had not, by their refusal to lend credence to the incarnate Word. Jesus was the fulfillment of all the revelation previously given by God through prophets and wise men. Those who appreciated the import of that preparatory revelation would have recognized Jesus as the one to whom it pointed forward, as the “Son” in whom God had spoken his perfect and final word “in these last days” (Hebrews 1:2).*
 - g) Grant Osborne, *The true people of God will center their lives on God’s Word (Josh 1:8; Pss 1:2; 119:15, 23), but these are false followers of God, under a threefold condemnation here for rejecting God’s revelation of himself through hearing, sight, and thinking. Their minds were closed to the truth, for they refused to believe in the One God sent.*
 - h) Merrill Tenney, *Without an inward preparation, there is little likelihood of any apprehension of a revelation from without, granting that it is given; nor can the voice of the Father carry much weight with a man who has rejected the Father’s emissary.*
- e. Scripture (39-40), ***You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, 40 yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.***
- 1) Related verses
 - a) Luke 24:27, *And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.*
 - b) John 7:17, *If anyone’s will is to do God’s will, he will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority.*
 - 2) Comments
 - a) Thomas Constable, *The Jewish leaders of Jesus’ day were serious students of the Old Testament, but they studied it for the wrong reason, namely, to earn eternal life through their studious effort (cf. Rom. 7:10; Gal. 3:21) ... The study of Scripture had become an end in itself, rather than a way of getting to know God better. Their failure to recognize Jesus as the Messiah testified to their lack of perceiving the true message of Scripture (cf. 1:45; 2:22; 3:10; 5:45–46; 20:9; 2 Cor. 3:15). Eternal life comes through believing on Jesus, not through Bible study (vv. 21, 26; cf. 1:4; Rom. 10:4), even though it is through Bible study that one comes to know Jesus better.*
 - b) Merrill Tenney, *After the destruction of the temple of Solomon in 586 B.C., the Jewish scholars of the Exile substituted the study of the Law for the observance of the temple ritual and sacrifices. They pored over the OT, endeavoring to extract the fullest possible meaning from its words, because they believed that the very study itself would bring them life.*
 - c) Edwin Blum, *The Jewish religious leaders studied the Old Testament with great diligence. They believed that if one could comprehend the words of the text, he would gain a share in the world to come. They considered those ignorant of the Law to be under a curse (7:49). Similarly many people today think Bible study is an end in itself rather than a function leading to the knowledge of God and godliness ... they failed to see that Jesus is the Promised One. He is the fulfillment of the Old Testament sacrificial system, the true righteous Servant of Yahweh, the coming Prophet, the Son of Man, the Davidic King, and the promised Son of God and great High Priest. In spite of the clarity of the revelation, they refused to come to Him for life (cf. John 3:19–20).*
 - d) Leon Morris, *Had they rightly read the Scriptures they would no doubt have come to recognize the truth of his claims. But they read them with a wooden and superstitious reverence for the letter, and they never penetrated to the great truths to which they pointed. The result is that in the presence of him to whom the Scriptures bear witness, in the presence of him who could have given them life, they are antagonistic.*
 - e) Louis Barbieri, *... they searched the Scriptures because they thought that in the mere knowledge of Scripture they had eternal life. Blinded by their self-righteousness, they missed the true Messiah about whom the Scriptures prophesied. This failure meant they were unwilling to come to Christ for eternal life, not merely that they were ignorant of the truth.*
 - f) Charles Swindoll, *... these practitioners of religion searched the Word of God for criteria by which they could merit their own salvation and so failed to encounter the Word, who promised to give them righteousness by grace, through belief... Rather than reading Scripture as a means to knowing God, they made the law their god.*

- g) Grant Osborne, *They sought eternal life in the wrong place, because the Messiah—the only basis for life—had come in fulfillment of the Scriptures. Since they have rejected Jesus Messiah, there is no hope for life.*
- h) R. Kent Hughes, *The Bible is not an end in itself but is a window through which we can learn marvelous truths about God and Jesus Christ.*
- i) Arthur Pink, *It is blessed to note the order in which Christ placed the three witnesses to which He appealed in proof of His equality with God. First, there was the witness of His own Divine works. Second, there was the witness which the Father had borne to Him through the prophets. Third, there was the testimony of the Holy Scriptures, written by men moved by the Holy Spirit. Thus in these three witnesses there is a remarkable reference made to each of the three Persons in the Holy Trinity.*

3. Rejection of the Witness (41-47)

- a. The religious leaders did not love God (41-42), ***I do not receive glory from people. 42 But I know that you do not have the love of God within you.***

1) Related verses

- a) John 2:24-25, *But Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people and needed no one to bear witness about man, for he himself knew what was in man.*
- b) Luke 11:42, *But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and every herb, and neglect justice and the love of God. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others.*

2) Comments

- a) Thomas Constable, *Jesus' criticisms of His hearers did not arise from wounded pride. He said what He did in order to win the Father's praise, not man's praise. Jesus' critics, in contrast, behaved in order to receive praise from one another (cf. v. 44). Jesus knew them well, but they did not know Him. Love for God did not motivate them as it did Him.*
- b) Leon Morris, *He does not set before himself the idea of pleasing people, but that of pleasing the Father. Therefore it is nothing to him whether people praise him or not ... The Jews worked out their pattern of religion and tried to fit God into it. They did not seek first the way of God and then try to model their religious practices on it. They succumbed to the perennial temptation of religious people.*
- c) Edwin Blum, *The Jews may have thought that Jesus was upset because He was not officially endorsed by the leaders. But He denied that idea. They thought they knew His motivation, but in contrast He knew them and the cause of their unbelief (cf. 2:24–25): they did not have the love of God (i.e., love for God, not love from God) in their hearts.*
- d) Warren Wiersbe, *They claimed to love God, but their attitude toward Jesus Christ proved that their love was counterfeit.*
- e) Louis Barbieri, *Christ abandoned all self-righteousness and sought glory (see comments on 1:14; 2:11) from God, not from people. "Glory" carries slightly different emphases in John. Here, "glory" means "praise," "honor," or "recognition." The Pharisees sought admiration from their contemporaries by their knowledge of Torah ... Seeking honor from people and love for God (v. 42) are mutually exclusive.*
- f) F. F. Bruce, *Had Jesus conformed to their ideas of what the Messiah would be and do, they would readily have honored him. But why should he seek such honor as they could give, when by doing the Father's will he could have the glory which God bestows—glory such as the only-begotten receives from the Father (John 1:14)?*
- g) Grant Osborne, *... their rejection of God's Son proved they didn't truly love God. Their "God" was no longer the God of the Scriptures, for that God sent his Son Jesus as the basis and ground of their salvation.*

- b. They sought glory from man not glory from God (43-44), ***I have come in my Father's name, and you do not receive me. If another comes in his own name, you will receive him. 44 How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?***

1) Related verses

- a) John 10:25, *Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name bear witness about me,*
- b) John 1:11, *He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.*
- c) Matthew 24:5, *For many will come in my name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and they will lead many astray.*

2) Comments

a) *I have come in my Father's name ...*

- 1] Thomas Constable, *If they had known and loved the Father they would have recognized Jesus' similarity to the Father. Having rejected the true Messiah the religious leaders would follow false messiahs, especially another messiah coming in his own name: the Antichrist. Rejection of what is true always makes one susceptible to counterfeits (cf. Luke 23:18–23).*
- 2] Edwin Blum, *Two things evidenced their lack of love for God. (1) They rejected Christ, the Father's "Representative." To insult or reject one's ambassador is the same as rejecting him. (2) They accepted false teachers or prophets. This reveals a lack of affinity with the truth.*
- 3] R. Kent Hughes, *Subsequent historical accounts tell us there were no less than sixty-three Messianic claimants who attracted followers. These false prophets gained adherents because their claims corresponded with men's desires. They offered easy victory and political and material power, while Christ offered a cross.*
- 4] William Barclay, *Why do people follow impostors? Because they make claims that correspond with people's own desires. The impostors came promising empires and victory and material prosperity; Jesus came offering a cross. The characteristic of the impostor is the offer of the easy way; Jesus offered men and women the hard way of God. The impostors perished and Christ lives on.*

b) *... you receive glory from one another ...*

- 1] Thomas Constable, *Jesus' critics could not believe on Him because they preferred the praise of men to the praise of God. They consistently chose what was popular over what was true. In contrast, Jesus lived solely for God's glory and did not seek the praise of people (cf. Rom. 2:29).*
- 2] Edwin Blum, *An additional failure was their desire for acceptance and approval from sinful men while ignoring the favor and the will of the only God. True faith was impossible because they were seeking the wrong object: man, not God.*
- 3] Kenneth Gangel, *True glory comes only from God, and this entire discourse has to do with Jesus as the true representative of that glory.*
- 4] Louis Barbieri, *Seeking glory from one another seriously hinders faith in Christ (cf. Jn 12:42–43). For faith in Christ, one needs to seek after the glory [i.e., glorification/resurrection; cf. Rm 5:2; 8:21] that is from the one and only God.*
- 5] F. F. Bruce, *The judgment incurred by those who refused the Messiah who came with credentials was this: they would readily follow a false messiah who had no credentials but his own claim. An outstanding fulfillment of this prediction came about in AD 132, when one Simeon ben Kosebah claimed to be the Messiah of David's line, and led a revolt against Rome. His claim was supported by Akiba, the most eminent rabbi of the day, who hailed Simeon as the "star out of Jacob" foretold by Balaam in Numbers 24:17. But Simeon's messianic pretensions involved himself, his supporters and the people of Judaea in the most fearful ruin.*
- 6] William Barclay, *The scribes and Pharisees desired the praise of the people. They dressed in such a way that everyone would recognize them. They prayed in such a way that everyone would see. They loved the front seats in the synagogue. They loved the deferential greetings of men on the street. And just because of that, they could not hear the voice of God.*
- 7] Grant Osborne, *Their whole life was given over to striving for human praise rather than pleasing God. This is a question we all must ask ourselves: To what extent do we want attention from those around us rather than seeking glory and praise "from the only God"? Our answer to that will tell us how easily we can be manipulated by those who appeal to our self-interests.*

c. Witness of Moses against those who reject Jesus' authority (45-47), ***Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father. There is one who accuses you: Moses, on whom you have set your hope. 46 For if you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me. 47 But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words?"***

1) Related verses

- a) John 9:29, *29 We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from."*
- b) Deuteronomy 18:15, *The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen*
- c) Luke 24:27, *And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.*
- d) Luke 16:31, *He said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.'*

2) Comments

- a) Thomas Constable, *These critics' most severe indictment would not come from Jesus but from Moses, whom they so strongly professed to follow but did not. Moses never taught that the Law was an end in itself. He pointed the people to the coming Prophet and urged them to listen to Him (Deut. 18:15–19). They had refused to do this ... If they had paid attention to Moses, they would have felt conviction for their sin and would have been eager to receive the Savior. If they had really believed Moses, they would also have believed Jesus, whom Moses wrote about.*
- b) Edwin Blum, *Jesus came as the Savior, not as the Judge (cf. 3:17). It was unnecessary for Him to accuse the people. Moses, whom they claimed to follow, would condemn them because they had broken the covenant he instituted and missed the Person he wrote about. On whom your hopes are set implies that they thought salvation would come by their good deeds in keeping the Law.*
- c) Kenneth Gangel, *The Jews were proud of their tradition, their knowledge of Scripture, and certainly proud of Moses. But according to Jesus, they really did not believe Moses. If they had, they would have believed and accepted the Christ of whom Moses wrote. Rejecting Moses therefore, they also rejected Jesus.*
- d) Leon Morris, *They were proud of their connection with the great lawgiver. But Moses, not Jesus, is their accuser before God. The present tense signifies that Moses is a standing witness against them, a present accuser ... Moses' writings were prophetic. They pointed forward to Christ (cf. 1:45). Therefore those who rejected the Christ did not really believe what Moses had written. And if these people who professed to be Moses' disciples, who honored Moses' writings as sacred Scripture, who gave an almost superstitious reverence to the letter of the law, if these people did not really believe the things that Moses had written and which were the constant objects of their study, then how could they possibly believe the words, the spoken words of Jesus?*
- e) Louis Barbieri, *Moses frequently prophesied of the Messiah (cf. Gn 3:15; 49:10; Ex 12:21; Nm 24:17; Dt 18:15; cf. also Jn 1:45; 3:14; 8:56). Anyone who believed in the Scriptures Moses wrote (and therefore believed in the Lord) would have believed in Jesus as the Messiah ...*
- f) Charles Swindoll, *The religious leaders rejected Jesus not because they were unable, but because they were unwilling ... The Lord is remarkably patient with our weaknesses, as John illustrates in the next segment of his narrative. Unwillingness to believe, on the other hand, is the result of pride; and pride invariably leads to destruction.*

SUMMARY

- Thomas Constable, *This discourse constituted both a condemnation of Jesus' critics and an invitation to believe on Him. Jesus cited much testimony that God the Father had given that identified Jesus as the divine Messiah. These witnesses were, besides God the Father: John the Baptist, all of Jesus' works, all that the Father had previously revealed that pointed to Jesus, the Old Testament, and specifically the witness of Moses in the Torah.*
- Warren Wiersbe, *The leaders would persist in protecting tradition instead of understanding truth (see Mark 7:1–13). But before we judge them, perhaps we ought to examine our own lives and churches. Are we permitting religious tradition to blind us to the truth of God's Word? Are we so involved in "Bible study" that we fail to see Jesus Christ in the Word? Does our knowledge of the Bible give us a "big head" or a "burning heart"?*
- William Barclay, *What had been the greatest privilege of the Jews had become their greatest condemnation. No one could condemn anyone who had never had a chance. But knowledge had been given to the Jews; and the knowledge they had failed to use had become their condemnation. Responsibility is always the other side of privilege.*
- F. F. Bruce, *The conflict between Jesus and the religious establishment in Jerusalem, begun in this chapter with his claim to be the Son of God, continues to be waged with increasing intensity throughout the Gospel until it reaches its climax in the passion narrative: "by our law he ought to die, because he has made himself the Son of God" (John 19:7).*