

Exalting Jesus Christ

"The Claims of Jesus"

INTRODUCTION:

- I. For centuries man has been debating the question, "What is God really like?"
 - A. Unfortunately, the opinions have been as different as they have been contradictory.
 1. Even if we gathered a panel of the greatest religious leaders in the world to answer that question, we would still have differing and contradictory opinions.
 2. However, suppose someone stands up and says, "I am God! I am the way, the truth and the life."
 - a. Now we have something we can verify – now we can examine His claim to see if He is speaking the truth or lying.
 - B. In the course of human history, one such man did stand up and call Himself God.
 1. He was Jesus of Nazareth, a man who lived and died nearly two thousand years ago, but has since turned the world upside down with His bold claim.

- II. In our lesson in our series "Exalting Jesus Christ" we saw how Jesus deliberately healed a man on the Sabbath to not only show His power to heal a man who had been infirmed for thirty-eight years, but also to expose the narrow-minded, legalistic hearts of the Pharisees.
 - A. In this lesson we want to look at how Jesus responded to the charges of the Pharisees by looking at the specific "Claims of Jesus."
 - 1. To do that I want us to do two things:
 - a. First, I want us to once again understand something about the background that led to "The Claims of Jesus."
 - b. And then, I want us to take a look at the discourse between Jesus and these Pharisaical Jews.
 - (1). More specifically, I want us to take special notice of the six specific claims Jesus made – all of which left those who heard His claims with only one possible conclusion.
 - (2). Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the Living God – the Messiah and the Redeemer of the world.

Body:

- I. So, let's begin by taking a look at the background events that led up to this discourse between Jesus and His Jewish critics.
 - A. Despite the fact that Jesus had performed such a vivid display of His power over disease – even a disease that had been plaguing a man for

nearly four decades – Jesus and the man whom He had healed were condemned by the Pharisees.

1. All these judgmental, law-making legalists could see is that Jesus had performed this healing on the Sabbath, and had commanded the man to take up his bed and walk on the Sabbath.
 - a. Even though the Law of God never condemned administering medical treatment to anyone on the Sabbath, the Pharisees considered that to be a violation of the Law concerning doing no work on the Sabbath.
 - (1). According to the way the Pharisees interpreted the Law of God, you could administer just enough medical care on the Sabbath to keep a condition from getting worse, but you could not do things on the Sabbath that would improve a person's medical condition.
 - (2). The Law of God said nothing about this being a sin, but the law-making, tradition-keeping, legalistic Pharisees said it was.
 - b. And even though the Law of God never condemned anyone carrying their bedroll on the Sabbath, the Pharisees believed carrying anything in your arms on the Sabbath constituted work – which the Law of God condemned.

- (1). Of course, the Law of God said absolutely nothing about it being a violation of God's Law to carry something in your arms on the Sabbath.
 - (2). But the narrow-minded, burden-binding, legalistic Pharisees said it was.
2. Therefore, the way these Pharisees interpreted the Law of God made Jesus and the man whom He had healed both sinners – despite the fact that neither Jesus nor the man had sinned against any part of God's Law.
 3. In reality it was the Pharisees who had sinned by binding laws and traditions on men that God had never approved.
- B. But it was the claim Jesus made of being equal to the father that caused the storm clouds over healing a man on the Sabbath turn into to a whirlwind of controversy.
1. Jesus had said: **John 5:17** – *"My Father has been working until now, and I have been working."*
 2. And John tells us the response of the Pharisees was: **John 5:18** – *Therefore the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, because He not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God.*
 3. But Jesus wasn't content to simply leave the issue of His deity hanging. He apparently wanted to make it crystal clear to these

Jewish religious leaders that He was who He claimed to be – the Son of God.

- II. So, let's take a closer look at the six specific claims Jesus made in the following verses in John chapter five – claims that left no doubts in the minds of anyone that Jesus would stand by His claim of deity.
 - A. The first specific claim Jesus made was to affirm that the conclusions the Pharisees were in fact true – Jesus boldly reaffirmed His equality with God the Father.
 - 1. **John 5:19-20** – *Then Jesus answered and said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner. 20 For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself does; and He will show Him greater works than these, that you may marvel.*
 - 2. Throughout this passage, Jesus never refers to God in a generic way by calling God "*our Father*" – it was always "*My Father*" or "*The Father.*"
 - a. In doing so, Jesus claimed a unique relationship with God – God was His Father, making Jesus God's Son.

3. These Pharisees correctly understood the implications of that claim: calling God "*My Father*" meant Jesus was claiming to be equal in every way to Jehovah God.
 - a. Jesus wasn't simply claiming to be "a" son of God, but rather "*the Son of God.*"
 - (1). Three times in just these two verses alone Jesus called Himself "the Son."
 - b. Jesus wasn't simply claiming to be God-like or similar to God, He was claiming to be of the same divine essence and nature of God – claiming to be just as much God as God the Father.
4. Not only did Jesus call God "*My Father*" – thus making Himself equal to God, Jesus said something else in this claim.
5. Just look at what Jesus implied in verse 19, when He said: ". . .*the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner.*"?
 - a. Jesus was saying He and the Father do not operate independently – they are doing the same work in harmony with one another.
 - b. Just like a shadow is neither identical nor independent to the substance from which it is cast, so the Son and the Father, even though they are two separate entities, are completely dependent upon one other.

- c. The Son cannot do His work independent from the work of the Father, and neither does the Father do His work independently or apart from the Son.
 - d. Their work is in harmony – in perfect sync – with one another.
6. The implication was profound! To criticize Jesus for healing the lame man on the Sabbath, meant to criticize the Father – since the Father and the Son did their work in harmony and in sync with one another.
- a. Essentially, Jesus was saying, "I did exactly what the Father Himself would have done" – "I healed this man on the Sabbath, and so would My Father."
 - b. That was just another way of telling these narrow-minded, law-making, legalistic Pharisees that they were dead wrong in assuming healing a man on the Sabbath was a violation of God's Law.
 - c. Jesus performed this miracle on the Sabbath because He was doing His work in harmony with God, His Father.
- B. But, if that claim wasn't enough to blow the socks off these Pharisees, consider the second bold claim Jesus made here: Jesus claimed He was the giver of life.
- 1. **John 5:20-21** – *For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself does; and He will show Him greater works*

than these, that you may marvel. 21 For as the Father raises the dead and gives life to them, even so the Son gives life to whom He will.

2. **John 5:26** – *For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself. . .*
3. Do you realize what Jesus was saying here?
 - a. He was claiming to have the same power as the Father has over the dead – just as God the Father can raise the dead, so can the Son of God.
 - b. The Father and the Son are not only equal as far as their divine nature and divine essence is concerned, they are equal in power – the power over death.
4. This claim comes from the seed of truth that John planted in his prologue, stating: **John 1:1-4a** – *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. 4 In Him was life. . .*
 - a. Jesus will vividly demonstrate His divine power over death in the eleventh chapter of John, when He raises Lazarus from the dead.

- (1). Peter told Cornelius and his household: **Acts 10:42** –
"And He commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that it is He who was ordained by God to be Judge of the living and the dead."
- (2). Paul wrote to the Corinthians: **2 Corinthians 5:10** – *For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.*
- (3). **2 Timothy 4:1** – *I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom:*
 - b. Jesus Christ is the God before whom we will all stand in judgment someday.
 - c. We will be judged by the very one who gave His own life, and shed His own blood, to redeem us from our sins.
 - d. That makes rejecting Jesus even more profound – because if we reject Jesus, we are rejecting the very one before whom we will someday be judged.
3. Not only that, but Jesus told these bitter, hard-hearted Pharisees that they need to give Him the honor He deserves because He is the final judge.

- a. Just as a judge is esteemed as "Your Honor," and all participants rise when he enters the courtroom, so it is only fitting that the highest judge, enthroned at the right hand of God the Father, should receive such honor from us – His creation.
- b. We will someday be standing in the presence of a judge who was once a prisoner – slanderously accused, unjustly tried, brutally beaten, mocked at His crucifixion, and killed on a cross.
- c. Because the Father honored Christ's selfless sacrifice – truly innocent, dying without speaking a word in His own defense – we, too, should reverently and publicly honor the Lord Jesus Christ.
- d. Paul said it best: **Philippians 2:9-11** – *Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, 11 and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

- D. But Jesus made another claim that obviously shocked these judgmental Pharisees to the very core of their being. Jesus claimed to be the One who determines man's eternal destiny.
1. **John 5:24** – *"Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life."*
 2. The words "most assuredly" – or "truly, truly" in other versions – ring out like a town crier's "hear ye, hear ye," drawing our attention to this most important message.
 - a. It's a message of hope and assurance to all who are faithful followers of Jesus Christ.
 - b. The message is simply: eternal life without the fear of judgment.
 - c. Just imagine knowing that eternal life is ours, and that we have absolutely nothing to fear of the coming judgment – in fact, imagine what it's like to actually look forward to that day of judgment.
 - d. That's what Jesus promised.
 3. However, like all promises there are conditions associated with that promise that we must meet.

- a. Jesus said, we first need to hear His word – that is, we must hear the gospel of Christ because it is the power of God unto salvation, as Paul tells us in Romans 1:16.
 - b. And second, Jesus said we must believe in God who sent Him – which implies we must have an obedient faith. We must believe and obey – we must act on those things we heard in the gospel.
 - c. If we do that, Jesus said, we have "*passed from death into life*" – we have escape the second death (hell), and have been granted eternal life.
4. And what's so wonderful about this marvelous gift of God's grace is that we never have to fear eternal separation from God.
- a. Why? **Romans 8:1** – *There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.*
 - b. **Romans 8:38-39** – *For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, 39 nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*
 - c. All we have to do is do our part of not walking "*according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit,*" and God will do His part

in guaranteeing that nothing will ever *"separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

5. No doubt these Pharisees were shocked beyond belief to hear Jesus make this bold claim that He alone determines man's eternal destiny.
- E. But it gets better. If all these claims of Jesus weren't enough to raise the blood pressure of these Pharisees to the boiling point, how about His next claim. Jesus claimed He has the power to raise the dead.
 1. **John 5:25-29** – *Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live. 26 For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself, 27 and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man.*
28 Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice 29 and come forth — those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.
 2. In this bold statement, Jesus gives us some important information about the resurrection. In fact, three crystal-clear facts surface concerning the final judgment:
 - a. First, there will definitely be life after death.

- (1). *" . . .the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live."*
 - b. Second, every person will be affected by it.
 - (1). *"Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth. . . ."*
 - c. Third, mankind will fall into two – and only two – categories.
 - (1). *" . . . those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation."*
4. But, as always, the choice of where we spend eternity is entirely up to us.
- a. We can choose to do *"good"* – meaning we can choose to be obedient and walk in fellowship with Jesus Christ – and receive *"the resurrection of life."*
 - b. Or, we can choose to do *"evil"* - meaning we can choose to be disobedient and walk in darkness – and receive *"the resurrection of condemnation."*
 - c. The choice is ours to make.

F. And now we come to the final claim Jesus made to these judgmental, condemning Pharisees. Jesus claimed He always does the will of the Father.

1. **John 5:30** – *I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me.*
2. This statement was like driving the final nail into the coffin of criticism.
 - a. The Pharisees had not only condemned Jesus for healing a man on the Sabbath, but they had also condemned the man for carrying his bed as Jesus had told him to do.
 - b. But Jesus told these Pharisees *"I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me."*
 - c. This was just another way of saying, "if you're going to condemn Me for what I did, then condemn God the Father who sent me, and gave me authority to do what I did."
3. Jesus will say something quite similar to these same Pharisees on another occasion found in the eight chapter of John.
 - a. **John 8:28-29** – *Then Jesus said to them, "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and that I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father taught Me, I speak these things. 29 And He who sent Me is with Me. The Father has*

not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him."

4. Jesus came to do the Father's will – not His own – but the Father's will.
 - a. He always does those things that please the Father.
 - b. And so should we.
 - c. If we truly expect to call ourselves disciples of Christ, then we must also *"always do those things that please Him."*

CONCLUSION:

- I. There should be no doubt about it. The claims Jesus made here are bold and radical.
 - A. No one could possibly mistake His claims or misunderstand what He was saying.
 1. Jesus was boldly claiming His deity – He was loudly proclaiming that He is the Christ, the Son of the Living God; the Messiah and the Redeemer of the world.
 2. In fact, the fifth chapter of John is literally filled with this claim to deity – as we will see in our next lesson.
 - B. But what does this mean to us?

1. Every one of us should come away from this encounter between Jesus and these Pharisees with renewed conviction that we are truly serving Jesus Christ, the Son of God.
2. Not only that, but every one of us should realize that Jesus is our only hope for eternal life.
 - a. He is not only the giver of life, He is also the one who will raise the dead when He comes again.
 - b. And it is before Him – and Him alone – that we will someday stand in judgment. Jesus is our judge.
 - c. Therefore, we must give Him the honor He deserves, and the honor God demands.

II. There is only one way you can honor Jesus Christ.

- A. And that's by your faithful obedience, and by your commitment to faithfully follow Him all the days of your life.
 1. If you've obeyed the gospel, and are walking according to the Spirit, and not according to the flesh, then your home in heaven is guaranteed.
 - a. You have no fear of the judgment because you have "passed from death to life."

2. But if you haven't obeyed the gospel, or if you're not walking according to the Spirit, but have been walking according to the flesh, you have a lot to fear in the coming judgment.
 - a. You can't reject the free gift of salvation that Jesus died on a cross to provide you, and then expect Him to say on that day, *"Well done good and faithful servant. . . enter into the joys of your Lord."*
3. But the good news is that there's still time to change.
 - a. That's why we're offering you this invitation to come to Christ at this very moment – coming to Him in faith and obedience, and have your sins washed away in baptism.
 - b. And if you've already done that, but have since turned away from the Lord, we're offering you this invitation to come back to Christ, repenting of your past, and confessing your sins to God, and allow the blood of Christ to once again cleanse you from all sin.