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John 5:18-47 -- Jesus' Defense for Healing on Sabbath and Calling God His Father.

Some people say that Jesus never really claimed to be God. They insist that the Church has read this interpretation into Jesus' words, but that He never actually meant to be understood that way at all. This is one passage that would clearly give such people some difficulty attempting to reconcile Jesus' words with their theory. This is one example of what I refer to as an "**unequivocal claim**". We can see by the reaction of the leaders how *they* understood Jesus' words. Since they shared a common language, culture, and religious heritage, we could expect that they would probably have a better understanding of what Jesus' words would mean in that context. Their judgment of His statement: "...*they were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He was ...calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God*" (vs. 18). The remainder of the chapter is a record of Jesus' further explanation of what He meant by what He said. The critics would hope to find some retraction, modification, or clarification of His offending statement. Instead, the Lord only more clearly and plainly reinforces the offense. He distances Himself from normal humanity and claims to have authority and responsibility that in the Jewish mind of that time belonged only to God. At the same time that he firmly establishes His uniqueness as the Son of God, He also clearly reveals to us His *modus operandi*. He does not do anything on His own initiative or authority, but does what He sees the Father doing (vss. 19,30). Even though He is equal to the Father, He makes clear that He is following the Father's initiatives and directions.

Notes:

Vs. 19 -- *Jesus therefore answered and was saying to them* -- The entire remainder of the chapter is Jesus' response to their determination to persecute Him. If He were intending to back off or soften His claim, we would expect Him to do so in this response. *Truly, truly, I say to you* -- A solemn or important statement is being introduced. *the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing* -- Literally, "the Son is not able/powerful to do from Himself nothing/not one thing, if ever not something He might see the Father doing (ongoingly, or as a process)". Jesus is saying that He cannot just go around doing miracles on His own. He only is able to do what He sees the Father already doing. *for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner* -- The previous phrase was the negative statement of this principle, namely that He cannot do what the Father might not be doing. Now He states it positively. What He sees the Father doing, He engages in it to perform in a corresponding way. He has made it His business to act on what He sees the Father initiating.

Vs. 20 -- *For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself is doing* -- The word for "loves" is from the Greek word phileō, meaning they have a relationship of affection and friendship. Jesus is not describing an attitude of distant benevolence, but a mutual intimacy and closeness. (How do you suppose the religious leaders felt about *this*?) The word for "shows" also means to "point out, reveal, demonstrate, establish or prove by outward evidence". *greater works ...that you may marvel* -- You ain't seen nothin' yet! God intends to amaze and overwhelm them by the miraculous signs He will do through Jesus.

Vs. 21 -- *For just as* -- Watch the comparisons that Jesus makes between His Father and Himself. What would you think of someone making statements like this? Can there be an question of the magnitude of what Jesus is claiming? *the Father raises the dead and gives them life* -- This latter phrase is a translation of the verb meaning, "He makes alive", or "He quickens". *even so* -- "As this, thus, in this manner". *the Son also gives life to whom He wishes.* -- The Son also "makes alive" or quickens people. The Greek does not support the idea of "giving life to", as though He was giving a commodity to someone. Rather, it is saying He "makes alive" the persons themselves.

Vs. 22 -- *For not even the Father judges anyone... He has given all judgment to the Son* -- This is a new and very radical statement. The OT characterized God as the Judge of all (Gen. 18:25; Isa. 2:4; Jer. 25:31; Joel 3:2,12-14). There was some precedent that the Messiah would also judge (Cf. Isa. 11:1-4; 16:5), but to say that God would not judge anyone, ...and beyond that to claim that He, the Son, would be the Judge of all..., was to make an incredible claim (cf. Acts 10:42; 17:30,31; II Tim. 4:1).

Vs. 23 -- *in order that* -- Indicates a purpose clause, the reason why God has given all judgment to Jesus. *All may honor the Son, even as they honor the Father* -- The purpose: to cause people to honor, value, and esteem the Son. The extent of this honor: literally, "according as", or to the degree that, they honor the Father. Jesus just stated that there should be equality in respect and devotion toward Him and His Father. He explicitly states what they had been afraid He was implying (cf. vs. 18). *He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him.* -- Not only should people honor the Son; if they do not, they dishonor God the Father because He sent Him.

Vs. 24 -- *Truly, truly* -- Important statement following. *he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life* -- Again, it is Jesus' word, but His word as the One sent from God. Jesus claims a unique authority based upon His status as God's representative. If there was any question about who this Son of God might be, Jesus' use of the personal pronoun, "My", removes any doubt. Literally, the Greek reads, "the [one] hearing My word/message and believing in/on/to the [One] sending (at a point in time) Me".... Jesus is saying that if you listen to what He has to say, and either (1.) believe that He is sent from God, or (2.) believe in God as a result of Jesus' teachings, then "age-type" life (life of the age to come, the kingdom of God) becomes operational in you. You *have* it. It is your current possession. Eternal life begins *now*. It is not just a future inheritance of those who persevere in faith, it is a dynamic that is introduced into our lives when we believe. *and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life* -- The original language uses a stronger negative contrast, better rendered as "rather he/she has passed across/crossed over out from the death into the life". The verb is in a tense that means that the person crossed over at a point in time and this has ongoing results, i.e., they remain "crossed over". Think of the impact of these words on these men listening to Him!

Vs. 25,28,29 -- *Truly, truly* -- Again, pay attention. *the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God* -- If it were not enough to claim to be the judge of mankind, Jesus now also claims to even have a part in the resurrection of the dead. The "*now is*" in vs. 25 probably refers to people who are spiritually dead coming to spiritual life through believing Jesus' teaching. It is clear that vss. 28,29, however, are referring to the resurrection of the dead at the end of the age (Dan. 12:1,2). The fact that some will rise to life, and others to a resurrection of judgment, identifies this resurrection as the second resurrection of Rev. 20:11-15, since none of those who are participants in the first resurrection will experience the judgment of the second death (Rev. 20:4-6).

Vs. 26 -- *just as... even so* -- Another comparison with the Father. The same life that is in the Father is in Jesus.

Vs. 27 -- *He gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man* -- The "He gave" language here, and in the previous verse, remind us again that Jesus claimed to be responding to the Father's initiative, not "taking things" for Himself. *the Son of Man* -- The Greek has no "the", therefore it should be translated as "a son of man", i.e., human. The fact that He was a son of man meant that He would be able to judge with understanding and compassion, having experienced the weaknesses and pressures of human existence (Heb. 2:17,18; 4:14-16). Note that He is **both** Son of God (vs. 25) and son of man, the mystery of the incarnation (Jn. 1:14). Both are Messianic titles (cf. I Chron. 17:11-14; Psa. 2:1-12; Dan. 7:13,14), however, so the listeners may have heard this as a further claim.

Vs. 30 -- *I can do nothing on My own initiative* -- Lit, "I am not able to do from myself nothing". A restatement of the principle stated in vs. 19, but here with different focus: *As I hear, I judge* -- Even Jesus' method of making judgments was to listen to the Father. *My judgment is just, because...* -- He has no selfish interest to distort His judgment. He only wants God's will.

Vs. 31 -- *If I alone bear witness of Myself, My testimony is not true.* -- The word "alone" is not there in the Greek, but is indeed what is implied by the following context. Jesus is not saying that if He talks about Himself, it is a lie (cf. 8:13). He is simply admitting that His own testimony would not be convincing, if that were all that supported His claims. Consequently, in the remainder of the chapter **He identifies five witnesses that corroborate His claims.** They are: **(1.) John the Baptist** -- vss. 33-35; cf. 1:6-8,19-37; 3:22-36 (It is significant that Jesus speaks of him in the past tense in vs. 35. Apparently, he was no longer alive.); **(2.) the works**, or miraculous signs, that Jesus did (Note again how Jesus speaks of His dependence upon the Father. The Father has given, or assigned them; but Jesus completes them.) -- vs. 36; **(3.) the Father** who sent Him (How, apparently, does He testify?) -- vss. 37,38; **(4.) the OT Scriptures** -- vs. 39; and more specifically, **(5.) Moses** --vss. 45,46. Why don't they get it? What is the real problem? -- vss. 37,38,40-47.