

Following the third miraculous sign Jesus gave to authenticate his identity as the Son of God, Jesus responds to accusations of lawlessness and blasphemy by explaining and defending his divine authority and power. Then he puts his accusers on trial. With your eternity at stake, do you believe or reject him?

Introduction – Have you ever heard someone make a seemingly over-the-top claim about himself?

Background – Jesus sought out a man who had been paralyzed for 38 years. The Jewish religious authorities discovered the man walking with his bed mat and thus breaking a Sabbath rule. When they tracked down Jesus as the one who healed the man and who had told him to pick up his mat and walk, they accused Jesus of committing a capital religious crime. Jesus’ self-defense provoked persecution and eventually led to his enemies handing him over to be crucified.

I. The Accusation Against Jesus

A. Breaking the Sabbath (v. 16)

1. At this point the Jewish religious authorities begin to persecute Jesus as they perceive the things he was doing. Why did they persecute Jesus? Because they were furious at having their Sabbath rules flaunted. Surely they knew that according to OT law, it was their responsibility to prosecute Sabbath breakers with capital punishment (Num 15:32-36).
2. The religious leaders were adhering to their interpretation of the law which amounts to human religious tradition that contradicts the law. In contrast, Jesus obeys the law of offering genuine love and compassion to others (Lev 19:18). The leaders discount the miraculous healing because he dared to do it on the day of rest. Rather than the weightier matters of the law like justice and mercy, they emphasize their broken rule.

B. Claiming equality with God (vv. 17-18)

1. Notice that Jesus didn’t respond to the accusation of his breaking the Sabbath by quoting the OT law or arguing like WCF 21.8: that according to the Bible, duties of necessity and mercy are appropriate activities on the Sabbath day. Such responses probably wouldn’t have invited persecution. It appears he goes way out of his way to give the most controversial defense possible. “My Father is working until now, and I am working.”
2. Jewish people in ancient times did not use the term “my Father” as it was considered language too intimate for addressing God. By saying “My Father” referring to God, Jesus implies a far more intimate relationship with God than other people had (cf. Jn 20:17). Using the Sabbath and his work on it as an example, Jesus equates himself with God. Jesus claims to be the Son of God—that he has a supernatural, unified relationship with God the Father, not in the way that ordinary human believers are called sons of God.

II. The Self-Defense of Jesus

A. The Father has granted all his authority to the Son (vv. 19-23)

1. Here Jesus defends his own ministry and self-identity by calling upon the example of the Father (Mt 11:27). He is compelled by his holy nature, and yet he freely chooses to submit his will, words, and actions to the heavenly Father (Jn 3:35; 4:34; 6:28-29; 9:3-4; 10:25; 14:10-12; 17:4). Jesus only acts in imitation of what he sees the Father doing. He possesses a unique spiritual ability to see the Father’s normally invisible works of providence in the daily happenings

of life. And Jesus claims to imitate the Father's works perfectly, yet with greater visibility, immediacy, and revealed glory.

2. What makes Jesus' perfect imitation of the Father possible? The Father loves the Son and shows him everything he is doing (v. 20). Jesus sees so clearly what the Father is doing because the Father lovingly reveals himself to his Son. Because the Triune God is love (1 Jn 4:16), the Father reveals everything about himself to the Son.

3. Why does the Father love to always work through the Son? (1) The Father and the Son are equal in essence (Jn 5:17-18); (2) The Father and the Son are equal in their works (Jn 5:19-22); and (3) The Father and the Son are equal in honor (Jn 5:22-23). Jesus is saying that no one can do an end-around the Son to serve the Father (Jn 12:44-45; 13:20; 14:7-9). The Son is the Father's only appointed ambassador, representative, agent, executor, revealer to people (Mk 1:10-11; 9:7; Acts 4:12; Phil 2:10-11). The Father has bestowed all his honor on the Son, so that to reject the Son is to reject the Father.

B. The Father has granted the life in himself to the Son (vv. 24-26)

Life is in the Father (Dt 30:20; Job 10:12; 33:4; Pss 16:11; 27:1; 36:9). The Father was never created and was never given life. Likewise the Son was never created, but always existed in an eternally begotten relationship to the Father. At no point in eternity past did the Father give the Son life. The Son has always had the same life in himself that the Father always has (Jn 1:3-4; 3:15-16; 11:25). The Father has granted the same characteristic to the Son to have life in himself. What this means is that Jesus, as the incarnate Son of God, has the ability and authority to give eternal life to whomever he wills because Jesus is the source of life (Jn 4:10; 6:51, 57; 7:38; 20:31).

III. The Offense by Jesus

A. Are you spiritually alive: have you heard my voice and believed? (vv. 24-26)

All are spiritually dead by nature, but some are made alive by the Son. In verse 24 is the substance of the whole gospel call (the character and charter of the Christian). The salvation of your soul depends on hearing Jesus Christ, which entails belief, trust, love, humble learning, and obedience. He is the Prophet who is to come. Hear him (Dt 18:15-19)!

B. Who do you honor as judge: the Son and my Father, or yourself? (vv. 22-23, 27-29)

1. In the OT three signs are promised to accompany the one who is both God and Man. (1) All power and authority are given to him (Dan 7:13-14). (2) The lame and sick are healed (Isa 35:6; Jer 31:8-9). (3) The dead are raised to life (Dt 32:39; 1 Sam 2:6; 2 Kgs 5:7). In John chapter 5 all three of these key messianic predictors unite in Jesus (1 – Jn 5:27; 2 – 5:20, 26; 3 – 5:21, 28).

2. Jesus speaks of the "second" or "bodily" resurrection at the end of the age. In John's Gospel, "doing good" means believing in Jesus, having faith in the Son of God (Jn 6:28-29). How is this just for the Judge of all the earth—to save some sinners but condemn others—only on the basis of their faith or lack thereof? Because the sins of believers have already been judged in the sacrifice of Christ on the cross where the Father poured out his wrath upon Jesus who is our substitute. Christ was judged, condemned, and died in our place that we might receive eternal life!

Conclusion – When you feel that tug on your spirit, and your heart becomes alive to God, and you begin to see the sweetness and beauty of the Son of God, then you know you've heard the voice of Jesus. Do not resist the one who gives eternal life to whom he wills. Believe on him and he will raise you up to everlasting life. What a marvelous Savior Jesus is! Like Father, like Son.