

The Greatest Life Ever Lived

A Study in the Incarnate Life of Jesus Christ and An Exposition of the Four Gospels

LESSON XXXIII : THE HEALING OF THE LAME MAN AT THE FEAST - PART 2

Matthew	Mark	Luke	John	related passages
			5:1-47	

Jesus' defense for healing the lame man on the Sabbath

The first part of Jesus' answer deals with His nature and prerogatives (a) in relation to the Father (v19-23) and (b) in relation to men (v24-29). Jesus then lays open the witness to the Son (v31-40) and then the rejection of the witness (v41-47). "The Lord's defense may be summarized as follows:

- **In attacking Me, the Son, you are attacking the Father Himself**, for the Son does what He sees the Father doing; He judges as the Father judges. He cannot do otherwise. Neither does He desire to do otherwise.
- Are you amazed because of this act of healing a sick man? **This was, indeed, a great work, but greater works will follow: imparting life to those who are dead** (yes, both to the spiritually dead and, at the last day, to those physically dead) and judging all men (both now and at the return in glory).
- Do you question how it is possible for Me to (a) impart life and (b) to pronounce and execute judgement? I can do the former because **the Father has granted Me to have life in Myself** (just as He also has life in Himself); and the latter, in **My capacity as Son of Man**.
- **The proper reaction to My words and works** is not base unbelief and hatred, nor even the attitude of mind that fails to rise above amazement, but faith which honors the Son even as it honors the Father.
- **Those who exercise this faith do not come into condemnation but have even now passed out of death into life**. In the great day of judgement they -- together with all the dead -- will also arise physically. But though all will be raised, there will be a great difference in the quality or character of their resurrection: those who have done good will come out of their tombs for 'the resurrection of life'; those who have practiced evil, for 'the resurrection of condemnation.' Implication: 'Therefore, embrace by faith the Son of God!' " [Hendriksen, *John*]

In v19-23 there follows four statements which begin with the word "for": "The Son doeth nothing self-determined of Himself, which would be impossible (v19a);

for His action is absolutely coincident in range with that of the Father (v19b); and this can be;

for His Father shows Him His widening counsels, which extend to the exhibition of greater works than healing (v20);

for it is the prerogative of the Son to give life (v21), as is shown to be the case;

for all judgement is given to Him, and men can see that He exerts this power (v22).

Hence it follows that men should honor the Son even as they honor the Father (v23)." [Wescott, *John*]

v19 Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father do: for what things soever He doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. : instead of modifying His statement to pacify the rising anger, Jesus strengthens it by beginning with a majestic introductory formula: "I most solemnly assure you...", then by continuing with a discussion which further strengthened His claims to deity. The gist of what follows is: "You accuse Me of breaking the Father's Sabbath ordinances and blaspheming by claiming equality with Him? That's impossible for that would mean the Son's will was distinct, separate and even opposed to the Father's will. But the Son's will is so coordinated with the Father's will that the Son can do nothing of Himself but only as He sees the Father do, and whatever the Father does, the Son likewise does."

practical: **don't be afraid to anger people if you are making them angry for the right reason**. As Jesus delivered the truth His audience became very angry. Rather than backing away from what was being said however, He continued even stronger. *Sinful man hates the Lord, and no one can present the truth expecting people will always fall over themselves to hear more!* The Lord can and does work in the hearts of sinners and there will be times when the gospel is presented that one will hear hungrily and want more. That in itself is always rewarding. But the majority of the time the exposure of man's sinful condition ignites rebellion and our message is rejected, occasionally with hostility. If that happens, our major concern should not be that they are angry but rather *why* are they are angry? **Are our listeners angry over what is being said or how it is being presented? Our approach should be prayerfully made in love and consideration, never as an attack. But if in doing so our listeners become angry, stay firm to the truth ... their anger is between them and the Lord.**

The Son can do nothing of Himself: "Because of His inseparable union with the Father: nor can the Father do any thing of

Himself, because of His infinite unity with the Son.” [Clarke, *Commentary*] “*The Son can do nothing of Himself*, self-determined, without the Father, nothing, that is, *except He see the Father doing it*. Separate action on His part is an impossibility, as being a contradiction of His unity with the Father.” [Wescott, *John*]

What things soever He doeth, these also doeth the Son : “God does nothing but what Christ does. **What God does is the work of God, and proper to no creature — Jesus does whatsoever God does, and therefore is no created being.** The Son can do nothing but what He sees the Father do: now, any intelligent creature may do what God cannot do: he may err, he may sin. **If Jesus can do nothing but what God does, then he is no creature — He can neither sin nor err, nor act imperfectly.** The conclusion from our Lord’s argument is: If I have broken the Sabbath, so has God also; for I can do nothing but what I see him doing. He is ever governing and preserving; I am ever employed in saving.” [Clarke, *Commentary*]

Likewise : “Better, as Rev., *in like manner*. *Likewise* is popularly understood as equivalent to *also*; but the word indicates identity of action based upon identity of nature.” [Vincent, *Word Studies*]

v20 For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth Him all things that Himself doeth: and He will shew Him greater works than these, that ye may marvel. : Jesus claims the right to heal the man on the Sabbath for the Father has shown Jesus what He (the Father) is doing in the working out of His eternal plan of redemption. “Doing” is in the continued sense, “continually doing”. The healing of the lame man is part of this eternal plan. Greater works than healing the lame man will the Father show the Son (such as raising the dead and pronouncing judgement) so that the religious leaders, already shocked at the healing of the lame at the pool, may be *really* amazed!

For the Father loveth the Son: the action of the Son is dependent upon the continual revelation the Father makes to Him in accordance with His eternal love. The word for *love* here is not *agapā* [see lesson 25] but rather *philei*. “*Agapāō* indicates a reasoning, discriminating attachment, founded in the conviction that its object is worthy of esteem, or entitled to it on account of benefits bestowed. **Phileō represents a warmer, more instinctive sentiment, more closely allied to feeling, and implying more passion.** Hence *agapāō* is represented by the Latin *diligo*, the fundamental idea of which is *selection*, the deliberate choice of one out of a number, on sufficient grounds, as an object of regard. Thus *phileō* emphasizes the *affectional* element of love, and *agapāō* the *intelligent* element.... Jesus’ sentiment toward Martha and Mary is described by *āgapa*, John 11:5. **Men are bidden to love (agapan) God (Matt 22:37; 1 Cor 8:3); never philein, since love to God implies an intelligent discernment of His attributes and not merely an affectionate sentiment.** Both elements are combined in the Father’s love for the Son (Matt 3:17; Jn 3:35; 4:20). *Agapā* is used throughout the [praise oratory] of love in 1 Cor 13, and an examination of that chapter will show how large a part the discriminating element plays in the Apostle’s conception of love.” [Vincent, *Word Studies*]

Ye may marvel: “The *ye* is emphatic and is addressed to those who questioned His authority, whose wonder would therefore be that of astonishment rather than of admiring faith, but might lead to faith.” [Vincent, *Word Studies*]

v21 For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom He will. : even as the Father imparts both spiritual and physical life, so does the Son have the authority for He is equally sovereign. Christ’s authority is seen in the spheres of resurrection (v21,25,26) and judgement (v22,23,27). God will make Christ the Judge in order that the Son may be honored. Those who believe escape judgement (v24).

As the Father raised up the dead: “This He did in the case of the widow’s son at Sarepta, 1 Kings 17:22, by the ministry of the Prophet Elijah. And again, in the case of the Shunamite’s son, 2 Kings 4:32-35, by the ministry of the Prophet Elisha.” [Clarke, *Commentary*] “The full significance of this claim of Christ to ‘quicken whom He will’ is illustrated by the second of the *Shemoneh Esreh*, the ‘Eighteen [Benedictions],’ of the Jewish Prayer Book. It is probable that this thanksgiving was used in substance in the apostolic age: ‘Thou, O Lord, art mighty for ever: Thou quickenest the dead: Thou art strong to save. Thou sustainest the living by Thy mercy: Thou quickenest the dead by Thy great compassion. Thou ... makest good Thy faithfulness to them that sleep in the dust ... Thou art faithful to quicken the dead. Blessed art Thou, O Lord, who quickenest the dead.’” [Wescott, *John*]

The Son quickeneth whom He will: “He raiseth from death to life whomsoever He pleases. So He did, for He raised the ruler’s daughter, Mk 5:35-42; the widow’s son at Nain, Lk 7:11-15; and Lazarus, at Bethany, Jn 11:14-44. **Whom He will. Here our Lord points out His sovereign power and independence;** He gives life according to His own will — not being obliged to supplicate for the power by which it was done, as the prophets did; His own will being absolute and sufficient in every case.” [Clarke, *Commentary*]

v22,23 For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: that all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He that honoreth not the Son honoreth not the Father which hath sent Him. : the reason for Jesus’ claim to equal sovereignty is because the Father does not judge anyone, in the sense that the Father never acts alone or separately from the Son in pronouncing judgement, but has committed all judgement to the Son. Thus the honor given the Father should be equally given to the Son.

This condemns the teachings of Jehovah Witnesses, the Way International and other like cults. **It is impossible to worship the only true Jehovah God while making Jesus a subordinate created being!** Jesus here claims equal honor as God the Father, a blasphemous statement for any who is not himself deity. To prevent any misunderstanding, Jesus adds that **any who does not give the Son equal honor as the Father does not honor the Father at all.** “If then the Son is to be honored, EVEN AS the Father is honored, then the Son must be God, as receiving that worship which belongs to God alone. To worship

any creature is idolatry: Christ is to be honored even as the Father is honored; therefore Christ is not a creature; and, if not a creature, consequently the Creator.” [Clarke, *Commentary*] “The action and honor of the Son are coincident with the action and honor of the Father. It is through the action of the Son that men see the action of the Father, and it is by honoring the Son that they honor the Father.” [Wescott, *John*]

For the Father: “The AV misses the climax in *oude*; *not even* the Father, who might be expected to be judge. [Vincent, *Word Studies*] Wuest: “*For not even does the Father judge anyone but has given all judgement wholly to the Son*”

All judgment: Literally, *the judgment wholly*. “Literally, *the judgement* which comes and will come, *wholly, in all its parts*, now in its first beginning and hereafter in its complete accomplishment.” [Wescott, *John*]

Which sent Him: “A phrase peculiar to John, and used only by the Lord, of the Father. See 4:34; 6:38,39; 7:16,28,33, etc.” [Vincent, *Word Studies*]

v24 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. : Jesus expounds on the two greater works (v20) previously mentioned: that of imparting life (v21) and judgement (v22). In the present sphere, Jesus is imparting spiritual life (v24-27) and will in the future impart physical life in the resurrection (v28,29). Lessons to be gleaned from this verse:

- **There is no spiritual life apart from responding to the Word of God.** There must be a *hearing* which should not be confined to the literal physical hearing of the Word. It would naturally include the reading of the Bible or a tract or even the deaf seeing His Word through an interpreter, etc. But upon the reception of the Word of God, there must be *faith* in the message, an acknowledgment of the truth of what is being received and a response on the part of the hearer. This is the scriptural response to hyper-Calvinism’s unbalanced “evangelism”.

- **All people are spiritually dead without Christ.** Having to be spiritually raised from the dead naturally pre-supposes that one is dead which is confirmed elsewhere in scripture (e.g. Eph 2:1). “From death: *out of* death, pointing to the previous condition *in* which he was.” [Vincent, *Word Studies*] “*But is passed from death unto life*. Has changed his country, or place of abode. Death is the country where every Christ-less soul lives. The man who knows not God lives a dying life, or a living death; but he who believes in the Son of God passes over from the empire of death, to the empire of life. Reader! thou wast born in death: hast thou yet changed the place of thy natural residence? Remember that to live in sin is to live in death; and those who live and die thus shall die eternally.” [Clarke, *Commentary*]

- **Spiritual life is instantaneous; all people are presently either saved or lost with no in-between.** Jesus stated that one who believes has passed from death to life. While all are born “babes in Christ” and unfortunately brings along with them the baggage of our old nature, there is a new birth and new life which is different that the old. The illustration has been given in the form of a question: which would you rather be: a large, strong, firm wooden post or a weak little sapling? The correct response would be that of a sapling for given time, the dead post will rot while the weak sapling will grow into a mighty tree. The difference is the presence of life. *Reader / listener: to which of the groups do you belong? You are either spiritually alive in Christ or you are spiritually dead, outside of Christ and heading for an eternal hell. There is no in-between!*

- **Eternal life is not a future gift but a present reality.** To those who hear and believe are given *eternal* life, here and now. “Eternal life is not future but present, or rather it *is*, and so is above all time.” [Wescott, *John*]

- **Eternal life is a reference to a quality of life as well as the length of the life.** “Life: literally, *The* life; the ideal of perfect life.” [Vincent, *Word Studies*] Wescott: “*the* life that is truly life.” The life Christ gives is life indeed, the life we were created to live. The illustration has been given of all people having been born with a God-shaped vacuum within and the unsaved spend their entire lives trying to fill that void. Only by coming to Christ does that vacuum become filled and the person may live free to serve God as was intended. *The Christians in America who do not live up to this ideal has fallen prey to Satan’s trap that the world can satisfy and therefore seek the things the unsaved seek. Fools that we are, we neglect the life God has given us to follow after things which actually hinders our happiness. When will we learn that God’s Word has the answer and not the world?*

v25 Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live. : “The present manifestation of Christ’s vivifying power in the spiritual resurrection is stated in contrast with the future manifestation in the general resurrection.” [Wescott, *John*] “Three kinds of death are mentioned in the Scriptures: natural, spiritual, and eternal. The first consists in the separation of the body and soul. The second in the separation of God and the soul. The third in the separation of body and soul from God in the other world.... Of the dead, our Lord says, the hour is coming, and now is, when they shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and live. The hour is coming, when all that sleep in the dust shall awake at the voice of the Son of man, and come to judgment: for He giveth life to the dead, Jn 5:21,28,29. Again, the hour is coming, when some of those who have died a natural death shall hear the voice of the Son of God and live again here. It is likely that our Lord had not as yet raised any from the dead; and He refers to those whom He intended to raise. Lastly, the hour now is, when many who are dead in trespasses and sins, shall hear the voice (the word) of the Son of God, believe, and receive spiritual life through Him.” [Clarke, *Commentary*]

v26,27 For as the Father hath life in Himself; so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself; and hath given Him

authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of man. : The fact that Jesus can impart eternal life is explained by the Son having self-sufficient, eternal life inherent within Himself as does the Father. This then gives Jesus the authority to judge since not only is He divine but He is also human, the Son of Man. This may be taken either with or without the article. If the sense is “a son of man” the meaning is that God has given all judgement to Christ since He is the God-man, acquainted with human thoughts, words, emotions and actions. If the article is supplied (while missing in the text, it does not mean it could not be rendered “the Son of Man” as of an official title), the sense is more of Christ referring to His Messianic function. Both are equally true and provide equally good sense.

Hath He given: “more strictly, gave, the aorist tense pointing back to the eternal past.” [Vincent, *Word Studies*]

The Son of man: “Better, a son of man. The article is wanting. The authority is assigned to Him as being *very man*. John uses the article everywhere with this phrase, except here and Rev 1:13; 14:14.” [Vincent, *Word Studies*] “The prerogative of judgement is connected with the true humanity of Christ, and not with the fact that He is the representative of humanity. The Judge, even as the Advocate (Heb 2:18), must share the nature of those who are brought before Him. The omission of the article concentrates attention upon the nature and not upon the personality of Christ.” [Wescott, *John*] Wuest: “*And authority He gave Him to be executing judgement because He is a son of man.*”

v28,29 Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.

: future judgement was not the issue to these Jews; it was the claim of Jesus that all judgement was to be done by Him. He begins v28 with “stop being surprised about this”.

- this judgement is universal: all who are in the tombs. This does not mean there will be none alive at that point but rather that everyone including those long dead will respond to this call
- this call will be creative since even those dead will hear and respond, so the call will include the power to be resurrected.
- note the contrast with the resurrection mentioned in v25: “Here the quickening is the inevitable result of the divine action; before it followed from the concurrence of faith with the divine message.... It will be observed that there is a contrast between the one result of the present action of the Son [shall live] and the complex result of His future action [shall come forth to judgement].” [Wescott, *John*]
- note the reference of faith which bringeth forth works: the verse does not describe the Christians as those that accept Christ” and the unsaved as “those that reject Christ”, but rather the future judgement makes a separation between “they who have done good” and “they who have done evil”. Wuest: *those who practiced the good things to a resurrection of life, those who practiced the evil things, to a resurrection of judgement.*” The universal teaching of scripture is that **eternal life is the free gift from God received by faith in the finished work of Christ, but that saving faith produces a changed life. It is impossible for one to belong to Christ and not be different than before!**

v30 I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and My judgment is just; because I seek not Mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent Me. : Christ concludes where He began: in v19 He stated that Him and His Father acts as One, here He says that the judgement itself is not taken by His own initiative but rather is based on the Father’s will. The Jews therefore had no right to judge and condemn Christ for any action He took since it all is enveloped within the will of God. “I can do nothing of Myself”, therefore to criticize Jesus was to criticize the Father.

I work not mine own will: : “I do not, I cannot attempt to do any thing without God. This, that is, the Son of man, the human nature which is the temple of My Divinity, Jn 1:14, is perfectly subject to the Deity that dwells in it. In this respect our blessed Lord is the perfect pattern of all His followers. In every thing their wills should submit to the will of their heavenly Father. Nothing is more common than to hear people say, I will do it because I choose. He who has no better reason to give for his conduct than his own will shall in the end have the same reason to give for his eternal destruction. ‘I followed my own will, in opposition to the will of God, and now I am plunged in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone.’ Reader, God hath sent thee also to do His will: His will is that thou shouldst abandon thy sins, and believe in the Lord Jesus. Hast thou yet done it?” [Clarke, *Commentary*]

“The section on the claims of Jesus is followed by this one which deals with His witnesses. These may be summarized as follows:

- **His witness concerning Himself** (v31; cp 8:14). This is true, but its reliability is denied by the Jews.
- **The witness of John the Baptist** (v33-35). He testified to the truth concerning Christ, calling Him the Lamb of God, the Son of God, etc. This testimony should be accepted by faith, unto salvation.
- **The witness of His works** (v36). These have evidential value, proving that Jesus was sent by the Father to accomplish His mediatorial task.
- **The witness of the Father** (v37,38). He had testified by means of the voice from heaven but especially by means of:
- **The witness of the scriptures** (v39-47). The Jews have been blinded by their lack of love for God, so that they cannot read these writings as they should be read. Hence, Moses, in whom they boast, will testify against them.” [Hendriksen, *John*]

v31 If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true. : “If I testify of Myself, My testimony is not true” -- not in the strictest sense because anything Christ would say would be true! This must be for several reasons: (a) if His testimony would not be true then Jesus would cease to be the sinless One; (b) later while confronting the Jews Jesus states that even though He alone gives testimony, His testimony is true (Jn 8:14). But Jesus is now condescending to the beliefs to those who are questioning His actions. His statement simply means, “If I testify concerning Myself, My testimony is not true *in your estimation*.” This is what they did in John 8:13. “If I had no proof to bring of My being the Messiah, and equal to God, common sense would direct you to reject My testimony; but the mighty power of God, by which I work my miracles, sufficiently attests that My pretensions are well founded.... In Jn 8:14 He says, Though I bear record of Myself, yet My record is true. And in Jn 8:18 He says, I am one that bear witness of myself.” [Clarke, *Commentary*]

If I: “The *I* expressed for emphasis: *I alone*.” [Vincent, *Word Studies*] Wuest: “*If I alone testify concerning Myself, [you say] My testimony is not true.*”

v32 There is another that beareth witness of Me; and I know that the witness which He witnesseth of Me is true. : Jesus continues this thought, working on the assumption they will declare His testimony concerning Himself to not be valid. He brings forth the One who always bears witness concerning Him. We know from v36,37 Jesus is speaking of the Father but this would not be immediately obvious to the Jewish leaders. They perhaps would believe Him to be speaking of John the Baptist. Jesus therefore brings forth John as one who did bear witness to Him.

v33 Ye sent unto John, and he bare witness unto the truth. : knowing His audience’s thoughts would not be to God but to John, Jesus states that even they sent emissaries to John to hear him (Jn 1:19-28). The delegation heard John the Baptist, that his testimony was that he was not the Christ but the forerunner that pointed to the Messiah, the Lamb of God. “There are several circumstances in John’s character which render his testimony unexceptionable. (a) He is consulted by the very enemies of Christ, as a very holy and extraordinary man. (b) He is perfectly free from all self-interest, having declined making the least advantage by his own reputation. (c) He is sincere, undaunted, and so averse from all kinds of flattery that he reproves Herod at the hazard of his liberty and life. (d) He was so far from being solicited by Christ to give his testimony that he had not even seen Him when he gave it. See Jn 1:19-28.” [Clarke, *Commentary*]

v34 But I receive not testimony from man: but these things I say, that ye might be saved. : the sense is “I do not accept (mere) human testimony” : why had Jesus mentioned this? Did He need the testimony of John? “So it was not at all His intention, on His own behalf and in His own defense, to appeal to the testimony of man and to rest His claim upon it. On the contrary, He said these things because this testimony regarding Him was true, and in order that they might accept it, take it to heart, *and be saved*.” [Hendriksen, *John*]

Jesus here contrasts this statement with the former. “Note the expressed *ye* (v33), emphatically marking the contrast between the *human* testimony which the Jews demanded, and the *divine* testimony on which Jesus relies (v34).... *But I:* emphatic, in contrast with *ye* (v33).” [Vincent, *Word Studies*] Wuest: “*As for you, you have sent men on a mission to John, and he has borne testimony to the truth. But as for Myself, not from the presence of man am I receiving testimony.*”

But these things I say, etc. “You believed John to be a prophet — a prophet cannot lie: he bore testimony that I am the Lamb of God, that beareth away the sin of the world, Jn 1:29; therefore, that ye may be saved by believing in Me as such, I have appealed to John’s testimony.” [Clarke, *Commentary*]

v35 He was a burning and a shining light: and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light. : John the Baptist attracted the crowds which included the religious leaders. They as thrill seekers rejoiced in the light given off by John for the short time he preached prior to being cast into prison. But while thrilling in the light given by John, they refused his message and rejected the Messiah.

Jesus refers to Himself as a light (to phōs) while He calls John a lamp (ho luchnos). “A lamp must be lit, and its wick must be fed with oil; moreover, it illumines a very limited space. Though we believe that the choice of the word was intentional, nevertheless, it is doubtful whether the contrast between *lamp* and *light* is the idea which predominates in the mind of the Lord. After all, Jesus Himself is also a *lamp* (same term in a book by the same author, Rev 21:23). He is *the* lamp of the new Jerusalem. The *emphasis* of 5:35 is rather on the fact that the Baptist, as lamp, was burning and shining, so that, as a result, *it attracted people!*” [Hendriksen, *John*] “The lamp is exhausted by shining; its illuminating power is temporary, and sensibly consumed. John the Baptist necessarily decreased (Jn 3:30).” [Wescott, *John*] “The expression of lamp our Lord took from the ordinary custom of the Jews, who termed their eminent doctors the lamps of Israel. A lighted candle is a proper emblem of a minister of God; and ‘In serving others, I myself destroy’ — a proper motto. There are few who preach the Gospel faithfully that do not lose their lives by it. Burning may refer to the zeal with which John executed his message; and shining may refer to the clearness of the testimony which he bore concerning Christ. Only to shine is but vanity; and to burn without shining will never edify the Church of God. Some shine, and some burn, but few both shine and burn; and many there are who are denominated pastors, who neither shine nor burn. He who wishes to save souls must both burn and shine: the clear light of the knowledge of the sacred records must fill his understanding; and the holy flame of loving zeal must occupy his heart. Zeal without knowledge is continually blundering; and knowledge without zeal makes no converts to Christ.” [Clarke, *Commentary*]

Ye were willing: “again the emphatic, *ye*.” [Vincent, *Word Studies*] Wuest: “*and as for you, you became willing to rejoice for an hour in his light.*”

To rejoice: “To jump for joy, as we would express it. They were exceedingly rejoiced to hear that the Messiah was come, because they expected him to deliver them out of the hands of the Romans; but when a spiritual deliverance, of infinitely greater moment was preached to them, they rejected both it and the light which made it manifest.” [Clarke, *Commentary*] “The word signifies *exultant, lively* joy. See Matt 5:12; Lk 1:47; 10:21; 1 Pet 1:6. The interest in the Baptist was a frivolous, superficial, and short-lived excitement.” [Vincent, *Word Studies*]

v36 But I have greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given Me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of Me, that the Father hath sent Me. : although they may have thought His initial reference was to John, it is actually another to whom He is referring. The very works which His Father gave Him to do surpasses the human testimony of John. These works included the healing of the lame man on the Sabbath of which they were so upset. So while the works themselves cannot produce faith, they cannot be ignored. To the honest seeker they do speak, as with Nicodemus who confessed “no one can do these things unless God is with him” (Jn 3:2). “However decisive the judgment of such a man as John may be, who was the lamp of Israel, a miracle of grace, filled with the spirit of Elijah, and more than any prophet, because he pointed out, not the Messiah who was to come, but the Messiah who was already come: nevertheless, I am not obliged to depend on his testimony alone; for I have a greater one, that of Him whom you acknowledge to be your God. And how do I prove that this God bears testimony to Me? By My works: these miracles, which attest My mission, and prove by themselves that nothing less than unlimited power and boundless love could ever produce them. By My word only, I have perfectly and instantly healed a man who was diseased thirty and eight years. Ye see the miracle — the man is before you whole and sound. Why then do ye not believe in My mission, that ye may embrace My doctrine, and be saved?” [Clarke, *Commentary*]

To finish: “Literally, *in order that I should accomplish*. Rev., *accomplish*.” [Vincent, *Word Studies*] Wuest: “*for the works which the Father has given Me in order that I might bring them to a final consummation*”

v37 And the Father Himself, which hath sent Me, hath born witness of Me. Ye have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His shape. : not only by His works did the testimony of the Father shine, but the Father Himself testified directly. This testimony might be a reference to the voice from heaven during Jesus’ baptism (Mk 1:11; Jn 1:34) or even a reference to the inward witness to the hearts of believers (1 Jn 5:9, 10). But the immediate context gives this testimony to be that of the scriptures (v38,39).

Jesus adds a rebuke. Though the Father has spoken, these Jewish leaders have neither heard His voice nor seen His form. Initially the meaning is of the word of God, Jesus’ speech here has a deeper reference. He is speaking primarily of Himself: Jesus is the *voice* (v19; Jn 14:19,24; Heb 1:2) and the *form* (Jn 14:6-9; 2 Cor 4:4; Heb 1:3) of the Father on earth. Through unbelief, they refused the Father by rejecting Christ.

Voice — shape. “Not referring to the descent of the dove and the voice from heaven at Jesus’ baptism, but generally and figuratively to God’s witness in the Old Testament Scriptures. This is in harmony with the succeeding reference to the word.” [Vincent, *Word Studies*]

v38 And ye have not His word abiding in you: for whom He hath sent, Him ye believe not. : that the reference to what Jesus is making is to Himself in the previous verse is made plain by the comments here. Jesus does not deny that in a sense the leaders had the word of God, but what they don’t have is the abiding presence of His word in their hearts. The reason for their not having God’s word abiding within is because they were rejecting the One the Father had commissioned to be the Messiah. “Though ye believe the Scriptures to be of God, yet ye do not let them take hold of your hearts — His word is in your mouth, but not in your mind. What a miserable lot! to read the Scriptures as the true sayings of God, and yet to get no salvation from them! Thy word, says David (Ps 119:11) have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against Thee. This, these Jews had not done. Reader, hast thou?” [Clarke, *Commentary*]

v39 Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me. : “search the scriptures” may be taken either a command or statement of fact; Ryrie says probably the latter [Ryrie Study Bible] Hendriksen says the form should be that of a statement rather than a command because (a) it follows the flow of the argument: “you have the word but you do not have it in your heart; so here: you search the scriptures but do not find the Christ in them”; and (b) Jesus comments soon afterwards that their problem is not that they don’t search the scriptures because the *did* spend time in God’s word (note v45-47). They minutely studied the writings of Moses. What Jesus is saying is that they miss it all because they failed to see Jesus in the writings. Wuest: “*You are always searching the scriptures, because, as for you, you think that in them you are having life eternal.*”

What the Jewish believed was correct: they could have everlasting life (note “because in the writings you think you have eternal life”) in the writings of the OT; their error was not seeing Jesus in the writings. “The word *ereunate*, which might be translated, ‘Ye search diligently, is very expressive. Homer applies it to a lion deprived of his whelps, who ‘scours the plains, and traces the footsteps of the man.’ And in *Odyssey* to dogs tracing their game by the scent of the foot.... Those who read the verse in the imperative mood consider it an exhortation to the diligent study of the Sacred Writings. Search; that is, shake and sift them, as the word also signifies: search narrowly, till the true force and meaning of every sentence, yea, of every word and syllable, nay, of every letter and yod therein, be known and understood. Confer place with place; the scope of one place with that of another; things going before with things coming after: compare word with word, letter with letter, and search the whole thoroughly.” [Clarke, *Commentary*]

v40 And ye will not come to Me, that ye might have life. : Jesus here gives the basic reason for their rejecting Him. Their blindness was the result of an unwilling heart. Therefore when they did not see nor hear God's voice (v37,38) it was because they did not *want* to hear His voice! "Though ye thus search the Scriptures, in hopes of finding the Messiah and eternal life in them, yet ye will not come unto Me, believe in Me, and be My disciples, though so clearly pointed out by them, that ye may have that eternal life which can only come through Me." [Clarke, *Commentary*] Wuest: "And yet you do not desire to come to Me in order that you may be having life."

Ye will not: "Indicating stubborn determination." [Vincent, *Word Studies*]

v41,42 I receive not honor from men. But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you. : Jesus anticipates their rebuttals. They may have at this very moment been thinking, "Oh, we know why you're so upset. Here you healed this lame man and we did not give you the praise you desired. You claimed to be equal with God and we were not impressed with that. You're just angry because we're not giving you what you want." Jesus confronts this by saying He does not do these miracles for self-glorification, nor does He desire the praise from unbelievers. The real reason for this confrontation was not His misguided desire for praise but rather their lack of love for God. "I do not stand in need of you or your testimony. I act neither through self-interest nor vanity. Your salvation can add nothing to Me, nor can your destruction injure Me: I speak only through My love for your souls, that ye may be saved." [Clarke, *Commentary*]

I receive not honor from men: "The Greek order is: *glory from men I receive not*. His glory consists in His loving fellowship with God. Men who do not love God are not in sympathy with Him." [Vincent, *Word Studies*] Wuest: "*Laudation from men I do not accept.*"

But I know you, that ye have not: "I know by the knowledge of experience." [Wescott, *John*] Wuest: *Moreover, I have known you from experience, that the love of God you do not have in yourselves.* "Don't say that you oppose me through zeal for God's honor, and love for His name, because I make Myself equal to Him: no, this is not the case. I know the dispositions of your souls; and I know ye have neither love for His name, nor zeal for His glory. Incurable ignorance, and malicious jealousy, actuate your hearts. Ye read the Scriptures, but ye do not enter into their meaning. Had you been as diligent to find out the truth, as you have been to find out allegories, false glosses, and something to countenance you in your crimes, you would have known that the Messiah, who is equal with God, must be the Son of man also, and the inheritor of David's throne; and that the very works which I do are those which the prophets have foretold the Messiah should perform." [Clarke, *Commentary*]

v43 I am come in My Father's name, and ye receive Me not: : Jesus proves His statement that they do not love God by saying if they did love the Lord, they would have accepted Him.

if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive. : though He came in His Father's Name (i.e. as His representative) they would not follow. But they would follow false Christs, which the Jews did periodically until the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD. "One false Messiah was Theudas; and another, Judas of Galilee (Acts 5:36,37). Then came Barkochba (132 - 135 AD), whom such a distinguished Rabbi as Akiba called *The Star of Jacob* (Num 24:17). There have been several scores of others since their days. The last one will be the antichrist himself (2 Thes 2:8-10). All of these present themselves without proper credentials: they come 'in their own name.' Yet people yield their all to them. They lead many astray." [Hendriksen, *John*]

I am come in my Father's name: "With all his influence and authority. Among the rabbins, it was essential to a teacher's credit that he should be able to support his doctrine by the authority of some eminent persons who had gone before. Hence the form, Coming in the name of another." [Clarke, *Commentary*]

v44 How can ye believe, which receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor that cometh from God only? : not only will they not believe but they *cannot* believe as long as they are constantly seeking praise from men and not the praise that comes down from above. **"The grand obstacle to the salvation of the scribes and Pharisees was their pride, vanity, and self-love. They lived on each other's praise. If they had acknowledged Christ as the only teacher, they must have given up the good opinion of the multitude; and they chose rather to lose their souls than to forfeit their reputation among men! This is the ruin of millions.** They would be religious, if religion and worldly honor were connected; but as the kingdom of Christ is not of this world, and their hearts and souls are wedded to the earth, they will not accept the salvation which is offered to them on these terms — Deny thyself: take up thy cross, and follow ME. It is no wonder that we never find persons making any progress in religion who mix with the world, and in any respect regulate their conduct by its anti-Christian customs, maxims, and fashions." [Clarke, *Commentary*]

v45,46 Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust. For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed Me; for he wrote of Me. : Perhaps they felt Jesus was accusing them. This was not His intention at all, nor did He have to. Hendriksen translates it "do not be thinking". Again and again the Jews appealed to the writings of Moses (e.g. Jn 9:28) but it was actually Moses who was their accuser, not Jesus. Moses wrote of Jesus and they refused to believe, therefore Moses' writings was what it was that condemned them.

I will accuse: "From against and to speak in the assembly. Hence, properly, to bring an accusation in court. John uses no other verb for *accuse*, and this only here, 8:6, and Rev 12:10." [Vincent, *Word Studies*]

In whom ye trust: "A strong expression. Literally, *into whom ye have hoped*. Rev., admirably, *on whom ye have set your hope*." [Vincent, *Word Studies*] Wuest: "*There is one who accuses you, Moses, on whom you have placed your hope.*"

v47 But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words? : Jesus ends His discourse with a rhetorical question: if they reject what Moses wrote concerning Christ, how then were they to ever accept what He was teaching? Jesus here forms a contrast, not only between Moses and Himself but between Moses' writings (grammasin) and between His speech, discourse (hrāmasin). They held the scriptures to be supreme and rightly so (although in actual practice it was the oral man-made additions above the scriptures). If they held to the inspiration of the scriptures, they should have listened and obeyed the words of Christ.

“It is no wonder that we find the Jews still in the gall of bitterness, and bond of iniquity: as they believe not Moses and the prophets, in reference to the Messiah, it is no marvel that they reject Christ and the apostles. Till they see and acknowledge, from the law and the prophets, that Christ must have come, they will never believe the Gospel. St. Paul says, 2 Cor 3:15, that even until this day, when Moses (i.e. the law) is read, the VEIL is upon their hearts: — so that they see not to the end of that which is abolished: 2 Cor 3:13. Nor will this veil be taken away, till they turn from worldly gain and atheism (which appears to be their general system) to the Lord, 2 Cor 3:16; and then the light of the glory of God shall shine on them in the face (through the mediation and merits) of Jesus Christ. It appears that this discourse of our Lord had effectually confounded these Jews, for they went away without replying — a manifest proof they had nothing to say. (1) In all periods of their history, the Jews were both an incredulous and disobedient people: perhaps it was on this ground that God first chose them to be keepers of his testimonies; for had they not had the most incontrovertible proofs that God did speak, they would neither have credited nor preserved his oracles. Their incredulity is, therefore, no mean proof of the Divine authority of the law and the prophets. The apostles, who were all Jews, partook deeply of the same spirit, as various places in the Gospel prove; and, had not they had the fullest evidence of the divinity of their Master, they would not have believed, much less have sealed the truth with their blood. Thus their incredulity is a strong proof of the authenticity of the Gospel. (2) When a man, through prejudice, bigotry, or malevolence, is determined to disbelieve, both evidence and demonstration are lost upon him: he is incapable of conviction, because he is determined not to yield. This was, this is, the case with the Jews — there are facts before their eyes sufficient to convince and confound them; but they have made a covenant with unbelief, and therefore they continue blind, ignorant, and wicked; obstinately closing their eyes against the light; and thus the wrath of God is coming upon them to the very uttermost. But shall not a rebellious and wicked Christian be judged worthy of more punishment? Certainly: for he professes to believe that truth which is able to make him wise unto salvation, by faith in Jesus Christ. Reader, it is an awful thing to trifle with the Gospel! — the God of it is pure, jealous, and holy. Come unto him and implore forgiveness of thy past sins, that thou mayest have eternal life.” [Clarke, *Commentary*]