

## **WHAT AN ANSWER~WHAT A DEFENSE!**

John 5:18-24 – Pastor Richard P. Carlson

We all need to know as we face this passage who these Jews were who plotting to kill Jesus. Let me frame the scene before I read our text again. These Jews were the political and theological rulers of all the Jews, whether as Pharisees, lawyers, scribes, chief priests, the high priest, Sadducees, and Herodians. The Jewish Supreme Court was called the Sanhedrin and that court was 71 Pharisees and Sadducees and the high priest, men who knew the Word, but did not know God, for they were using the Word as their diving board for legalism, adding countless other laws. On this occasion, Jesus went after them to win them to himself, but out of all 71, we know of no converts but the ruler of the Jews, Nicodemus, (John 3) and one of his cohorts, Joseph of Arimathea, (John 19:38). They almost all rejected Jesus' Messiahship, and His Gospel of repentance (Mark 1:14-15). The Sanhedrin wanted theological and political control, and they saw no shame in paying Judas, one of Jesus' disciples to betray Jesus. Jesus' Gospel beginning with repenting and living a life of repentance, believing, and receiving Jesus—they rejected categorically, so they plotted with money to shut Jesus up and finally they insisted on His crucifixion. All repenters know that whatever sins we commit and first and foremost against God (Psalm 51:4, and Joshua 7:20). This defense was made in the presence of John as these words are direct quotes. Let's read our text and pray.

In the mountains of the Pacific Northwest, a few years ago, a man was sitting beside his campfire while he roasted a bird over the fire with eager anticipation. About this time, a forest ranger walked into his camp and asked the camper what he was preparing for dinner. The camper replied as he took his first bite, that it was a seagull. A frown came over the ranger's face as he informed the camper that it was against the law to kill that particular bird, and that he would have to give him a citation. The camper responded by telling the ranger how he had lost his way, and that he had consumed all of his food. In desperation, he said he had managed to kill this seagull to maintain his strength. After listening to his story, the forest ranger told him, "I'll let it go this time with a warning." The camper thanked the ranger profusely. Just as the ranger was about to leave, he asked the camper, "Just out of curiosity, what does seagull taste like?" Thinking quickly, the camper responded, "Well, I would place it somewhere between a spotted owl and a bald eagle."

Needless to say, this camper's words got him into even more trouble. He would have been better off not to have said anything at all. The context of our text today is John 5:18 which tells us how Jesus was already in deep trouble with the scribes and Pharisees, who wanted to kill Him. We read, "This was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because not only was Jesus breaking the Sabbath (by healing the invalid at the Pool of Bethesda on the Sabbath) but He was also calling God His own Father. Did Jesus mean to get Himself in more trouble? Strangely, yes. Jesus meant to give this most amazing defense and answer for who He is and was. Jesus was pronounced guilty of breaking the Sabbath by healing the invalid, and secondly, he was instructing the healed paralytic to break the Sabbath by asking him to pick up his pallet and walk home. Jesus' defense of who He is a defense greater than any other defense He ever made. It was His defense of His life and, His defense of being God Himself. Jesus in this powerful defense, answered the charge that He was a Sabbath-breaker, a lawbreaker, and a blasphemer. This defense

is fourfold. If we will let what Jesus answered the Pharisees sink in, He will assure and reassure us that the Savior of our life is Life Himself. What did Jesus say to these Jews who were out to kill Him? What is this four-fold defense?

**WHEN YOU ATTACK ME (JESUS SAID) YOU ARE ATTACKING GOD THE FATHER.** (I.) Notice verse 19. “So, Jesus said to them. “Truly, truly. (amen, amen-verity, verily) 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.” Notice this double seal of truth Jesus gave—truly, truly. Jesus is telling these Pharisees and scribes out to kill Him. “If you are going to charge Me with breaking the Sabbath law, your charge is against My Father also. You are right in thinking I have said I was equal with God the Father, for I am equal with Him. The very relationship that I have with the Father makes it impossible for Me to act apart from the Father’s will.” What an incredible answer!!! Jesus was and still is saying that there is flawless correspondence between Himself and God the Father.

**There are some implications of what Jesus was saying. What are they? (1) Jesus was human, but He also was divine.** Jesus’ divinity precludes and shuts out any possibility for Him to oppose God His Father. When Jesus was in Gethsemane, in agony as the God-man, Jesus knew death on the cross was ahead. He prayed to His Father, “If it be Your will, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not My will, but Yours be done.” Christ’s divine love for you and me was no different from the Father’s love for us. The love of God demanded Christ’s sacrifice for our sins but remember, the pain and agony would soon be felt in Jesus’ human flesh as a man. All our sins crushed Jesus physically, mentally, and emotionally. He felt it all and He died as a man would die, yet He was and is our eternal God-Man. The God-Man, Jesus Christ, was soon to be crucified, dead, buried, but not defeated, for Jesus, God the Son, had, and has the power over sin, and even, death. He arose!!!

**If Jesus was only a man, (2) He would have opposed God the Father, for all people have sinned, even Abraham, Moses, David, Daniel, Peter and Paul.**

Jesus cannot oppose the Father for He said, John 10:30, “I and the Father are one.” To see Jesus in action is to see God in action. What God the Father does are the things Jesus does. In Jesus, we see God. Jesus later would tell Philip in John 14:9, “Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know Me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, “Show us the Father?” The mind of Jesus is the mind of God. The words of Jesus are the words of God. The actions of Jesus are the actions of God the Father.

**What Jesus said (3) about His seeing and watching the Father is beyond anything we can totally understand.** His eyes were ever on His Father. None of us can fully fathom the inwardness of all Jesus seeing of His Father in His short earthly ministry. Jesus’ will and work was in every way the Father’s will and work.

**Jesus’ first word of defense (4) is dynamite we need to keep us free of the cults and other religions today.** Jehovah’s Witnesses speak of having a special in with God the Father, but they don’t. It’s a lie, for they deny Christ is God, but say He is instead, God’s first creation. But Jesus is still saying today, “When you attack Me, you are attacking God the Father. What was Jesus’ second defense?

**WHEN I (JESUS) HEALED THE INVALID, THAT WAS ONLY THE BEGINNING OF EVEN GREATER WORKS THAT I WILL DO.** (II.) Notice John 5:20-21. “For the Father loves the Son and shows Him all He Himself is doing. And greater works than these will He show Him, so that you may marvel. For as the Father raises the dead, and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom He will.” Jesus was telling those ready to kill Him, “You’ve seen nothing yet. You were amazed that I healed this invalid who was paralyzed for 38 years. Many prophets have begun great works. My healing of this invalid is only the beginning of My miracles. I’ve only just begun. I too will raise the dead for I am My Father’s Son—God the Son.” What are these greater works of Jesus?

**Both I and My Father (1) will raise the spiritually dead to life.** Certainly, Jesus had this in mind as He was speaking of His eternal plan of redemption to raise the spiritually dead, those separated by sin from God, from death to new life in Christ. Jesus spoke in verse 20 about the Father loving Him as His Son, proving that this eternal plan of redemption was never hidden from Jesus—it was God’s plan from before the foundation of the earth for Jesus to die on the cross. The Father shows and keeps showing all things He Himself is doing to His Son. Salvation is one of the greater works only wrought by God the Father and God the Son as He the Father, and Jesus, the Son, in salvation, raises us up, the spiritually dead, to life in Christ. None of our salvation would be available (Eph. 2:8-10) apart from Jesus’ own resurrection. The Bible teaches that our spiritual resurrection to eternal life is glorious. We as lost sinners are as spiritually lifeless and helpless as a corpse. This doesn’t mean we are physically dead, but it does mean that no matter how we might try as an undertaker to dress ourselves up so others would think we are alive---such exercises are foolish. A spiritual corpse, no matter the outer dressing or the plastic smile, is still as dead as every other spiritual corpse. The miracle of salvation is that though we cannot save ourselves/give ourselves life, we have a Savior and Lord who raises us up from the dead when we hear God’s Word, repent, and believe in Jesus and that God the Father sent His Son to save us, John 3:16.

**Both I and My Father (2) will raise the physically dead to life.** These greater works include the physical raising of the dead in the first and second resurrection. In the first resurrection, we as Christ’s born-again righteous will be given new bodies like unto Jesus’ resurrection body, and we will reign forever with Christ. In the second resurrection, unbelievers will receive resurrected bodies that will burn forever in eternal hellfire. This power to raise the dead for eternal life or eternal death/fire will someday leave the whole world amazed, marveling. But marveling and believing in Jesus are not synonymous. At the Great White Throne Judgement, many will be amazed, but their amazement and marveling will be too late. The fact that Jesus has the authority to raise the dead to life, is proof that He is equal with God the Father, and therefore, He is God.

**Have you truly believed in Jesus the Savior (3) or have you only marveled at Him?** Multitudes marvel at Jesus. They even send out beautiful Christmas cards to friends—but though they marvel, they do not repent, believe, and receive Jesus. You’ve read, “One Solitary Life, written by Dr. James Allan, in 1926. It reads. “He was born in an obscure village, the child of a peasant woman. He grew up in another obscure village where He worked in a carpenter shop until He was thirty. He never wrote a book. He never held an office. He never went to college. He never visited a big city. He never travelled more than

two hundred miles from the place where He was born. He did none of the things usually associated with greatness. He had no credentials, but Himself. He was only thirty-three when His friends ran away. One of them denied Him. He was turned over to His enemies and He went through the mockery of a trial. He was nailed to a cross between two thieves. While dying, his executioners gambled for his clothing, the only property He had on earth. When He was dead, He was laid in a borrowed grave through the pity of a friend. Nineteen centuries have come and gone. And today, Jesus is the central figure of the human race and the leader of mankind's progress. All the armies that have ever marched, all the navies that have ever sailed, all the parliaments that have ever sat, and all the kings that ever reigned put together, have not affected the life of mankind on earth as powerfully as that one solitary life." Those are amazing words, but marveling will not save us. The Pharisees marveled at Jesus, but afterwards they left Him and went away.

Listen to Jesus in Mt. 22:15-22. We read, "Then the Pharisees went and plotted how to entangle Him in His words. And they sent their disciples to Him, along with the Herodians, saying, "Teacher, we know that You are true and teach the way of God truthfully, and You do not care about anyone's opinion, for You are not swayed by appearances. Tell us, then, what You think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?" But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, "Why put Me to the test, you hypocrites? Show Me the coin for the tax." And they brought Him a denarius. And Jesus said to them, "Whose likeness and inscription is this?" They said, "Caesar's." Then He said to them, "Therefore render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." When they heard it, they marveled. And they left him and went away. Marveling in Jesus will not save us. 3rd defense:

**WHEN I (JESUS SAID) GIVE LIFE AND PRONOUNCE JUDGMENT, I AM WORTHY OF HONOR AS MY FATHER IS.** (III.) Notice John 5: 22-23. We read, "The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son, 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." Jesus was saying, "If you fail to honor Me, you cannot honor the Father." Not only are the Father and the Son equal in essence and equal in their working together: they are and must always be equal in dignity and honor. There are parts of this truth we need to talk about.

(1) **Is Jesus contradicting Himself by saying He is the judge in verse 22?** Since the Father can give life, as the Son can too, but the Father cannot judge and that the Son alone, without His Father, judges—this might confuse us. Remember that Jesus does nothing of Himself. Even in coming incarnate to earth, Jesus did not do that of Himself alone. The incarnation was the divine mission of the Father from all eternity. The Father's giving all judgment to the Son shows it is true all God the Son's judgment is also His Father's judgment. The Father judges through the Son.

(2) **Why did the Father give all judgment to the Son?** The Father gives all judgment to the Son so all will honor the Father. Why? Why would the Father want the Son to share equal honor with Him? If the Father had or ever has a lesser purpose for the Son, the Father would deny Himself. Jesus and the Father are one.

(3) **Did all of you know that God the Father's own words make a created Jesus, the**

**Jesus of the cults, and other world religions, an impossibility?** We read words from God our Father in Isaiah 42:8, “I am the Lord; that is My name; My glory I give to no other, nor my praise to carved idols.” And in our text, in John 5: 23, we read, “Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him.” This is where those believing in many gods are left standing naked and condemned. They honor neither the Father nor the Son, but they believe in gods, plural of their own making. Brigham Young wrote, “When our father Adam came into the Garden of Eden. He came into it with a celestial body and brought Eve, one of his celestial wives, with him. He is our father and our God and the only God with whom we have to do. Jesus, our elder brother, was begotten in the flesh by the same character that was in the garden of Eden, and who is our Father in heaven.” Joseph Smith wrote, “God Himself was once as we are now and is an exalted man.” Lorenzo Snow said, “As man is, God once was. As God is, man may become.” Those words totally dishonor both the Father and the Son. There remains one last defense that Christ makes, and it is the clincher as well as our Lifesaver.

**IN BELIEVING ME, (JESUS) YOU HAVE EVERLASTING LIFE AND NEED**

**FEAR NO CONDEMNATION.** (IV.) For the second time, Jesus used His double seal of truth, saying, “Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears My word and believes Him who sent Me, **has eternal life.** (present tense) He does not come into judgment but **has passed from death to life.** (future tense) ” To ignore or disregard the Son is eternally fatal.

Where thus were these Jewish leaders who were seeking to kill Jesus? Somehow, they thought they were honoring God by contending for the Sabbath and by refusing to believe in Jesus. I listen with inner horror and a shudder at many today who speak of a relationship with the Man Above, or the Man Upstairs, for they set aside the Son. Thus, God is robbed of His deserving honor, and such unbelievers stand condemned already.

**Notice in v. 24, (1) the defense of the Gospel Jesus gave.** What must we do to be saved?

We must accept the Word of Christ and have faith in the Father who sent the Son. This simple faith in the Father and the Son is basic; nothing else will save. Nothing else will save. This is the requirement for present and future salvation. Notice the past and the present salvation we have.

**In Jesus’ defense, (2) He begged the Pharisees and Jewish leaders to believe and receive Him.**

Jesus was telling them they could pass from death to life. Jesus’ words about life are the opposite of Shakespeare’s view of life, as Macbeth says, “Life's but a walking shadow; a poor player, that struts and frets his hour upon the stage, and then is heard no more: it is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.” Jesus is the Lord of history who moves across every page of history, and His added presence signifies everything. One Hindu said, “No one else is seriously bidding for the heart of the world, but Jesus Christ.” Jesus is bidding for you today. Have you repented, believed, and received the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior? Let’s pray!!!