

Pool of Bethesda

Christian pilgrims to Jerusalem in the centuries to follow would establish shrines at the presumed locations of almost every episode of Jesus' activity in the holy city. In only a very few instances, however, can these pious traditions be verified by archaeological evidence. One such case is shown here.

According to the Gospel of John, Jesus healed a lame man at a pool called Bethesda (or Beth-zatha) near the "Sheep Gate" ("sheep market") John 5:2-9. Excavations by the White Father (a Roman Catholic order) at this spot where tradition had placed the pool, north of the Temple Mount, have confirmed that a Crusader church lay above remains of an earlier chapel. This chapel, in turn, had replaced a 5th century AD (400's) church that had been erected directly above the deep and wide expanses of a major reservoir of the Roman period.

This trench has exposed only part of the original pool under the successive layers of Christian shrine buildings to the right. Tunnels and soundings have indicated that the original installation was actually two pools forming parallel irregular rectangles with a separating dike between them. The double pools extend under present-day buildings to cover an area approximately 200 feet east-west and about 280 feet north-south, an area in excess of 5,000 square yards. The pools had been cut deeply down into the bedrock and were surrounded by porticoes with columns almost 25 feet high to create a magnificent enclosure. (The Copper Scroll from the Dead Sea Scroll caves at Qumran probably refers to these features now known from excavation by calling the place Beth Eshdathayin, "House of the Twin Pools.")

Bethesda

The pool is situated near the northeast corner of the Old City, close to the Sheep Gate (Neh. 3:1; 12:39). Perhaps John saw some spiritual significance to this location, for he had already told his readers that Jesus Christ is "the Lamb of God" (John 1:29).

We do not know which feast Jesus was observing when He went to Jerusalem, and it is not important that we know. His main purpose for going was not to maintain a religious tradition but to heal a man and use the miracle as the basis for a message to the people. The miracle illustrated what He said in John 5:24—the power of His Word and the gift of life.

Bethesda

He touched me

Devotional Thought for the Pools of Bethesda

Read John 5:1-15.

Modern versions of the Bible indicate that John 5:3b-4 are missing from the earliest and best manuscripts. Likely John didn't write these verses, but someone inserted them after AD 400 to explain the superstition the sick man mentioned in John 5:7.

A mystical notion existed that an angel of God would stir the waters at the Pools of Bethesda, and the first person to enter would get healed.

Not only do the early manuscripts offer no support for these insertions, but good theology also contradicts this cruel, works-based arrangement.

When Jesus asked sick man, "Do you want to be healed?" his answer revealed that he believed that healing depended on his ability to outrun the others to the Pools of Bethesda.

He clearly believed the superstition, and thus, [he saw his prospect for healing as hopeless](#).

Jesus' healing of this man revealed that [God's kindness is available](#) not simply to the swift—but to everyone.

When the Lord later searched for him and "found him in the temple" (John 5:14), Jesus' words show that *the physical healing represented an act of [God's kindness intended as an incentive for the healed man to repent of his sins](#)*.

Think about how God's kindness has proven abundant in your own life.

Indeed, God's kindness toward us is a huge motivation to urge us to repent and to obey Him.

"Do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?" —Romans 2:4

5:1–18 Although opposition to Jesus smoldered beneath the surface (e.g., 2:13–20), the story of Jesus’ healing at the Pool of Bethesda highlights the beginning of open hostility toward Him in Jerusalem in the southern parts of Palestine. The passage may be divided into 3 parts: 1) the miracle performed (vv. 1–9); 2) the Master persecuted (vv. 10–16); and 3) the murder planned (vv. 16–18).

5:1 feast of the Jews. John repeatedly tied his narrative to various Jewish feasts, (2:13-Passover; 6:4-Passover; 7:2-Tabernacles; 10:22-Hanukkah or Feast of Dedication; and 11:55-Passover), but this reference is the only instance when he did not identify the particular feast occurring at the time.¹

5:2 Sheep Gate. Most likely this is a reference to the gate identified in Neh. 3:1, 32; 12:39. It was a small opening in the N wall of the city, just W of the NE corner. **there is ... a pool.** Some have suggested that John wrote his gospel before the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, because his usage of “is” here implies that the pool still existed. However, John frequently used what is known as a “historical present” to refer to past events, so this argument carries little weight. For more on the date of writing, see Introduction: Author and Date. **Bethesda.** “Bethesda” is the Gr. transliteration of a Heb. (or Aram.) name meaning “house of outpouring.”

5:3a lay. It was a custom at that time for people with infirmities to gather at this pool. Intermittent springs may have fed the pool and caused the disturbance of the water (v. 7). Some ancient witnesses indicate that the waters of the pool were red with minerals, and thus thought to have medicinal value.

5:3b, 4 The statement in the latter half of v. 3, “waiting for the moving of the water,” along with v. 4 are not original to the gospel. The earliest and best Gr. manuscripts, as well as the early versions, exclude the reading. The presence of words or expressions unfamiliar to John’s writings also militate against its inclusion.

5:5 thirty-eight years. John included this figure to emphasize the gravity of the debilitating disease that afflicted the individual. Since his sickness had been witnessed by many people for almost 4 decades, when Jesus cured him everyone knew the genuineness of the healing (cf. v. 9).

5:6 knew. The word implies supernatural knowledge of the man’s situation (1:47, 48; 4:17). Jesus picked the man out from among many sick people. The sovereign initiative was His, and no reason is given as to His choice.

5:8 Rise, take ... walk. In the same way that He spoke the world into being at creation, (Gen. 1:3), Jesus’ spoken words had the power to cure (cf. 1:3; 8:58; Gen. 1:1; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2). **bed.** The “bed” or “mat” was normally made of straw and was light enough so that it could be carried on the shoulder of a well person who assisted the infirm (cf. Mark 2:1).

5:9 took up his bed, and walked. This phrase emphasizes the completeness of the cure (cf. v. 5).

5:10, 11 The OT had forbidden work on the Sabbath but did not stipulate what “work” was specifically indicated (Ex. 20:8–11). The assumption in Scripture seems to be that “work” was one’s customary employment, but rabbinical opinion had developed oral tradition beyond the OT which stipulated 39 activities forbidden (Mishnah *Shabbath* 7:2; 10:5), including carrying anything from one domain to another. Thus, the man had broken oral tradition, not OT law (*see notes on v. 16*).

5:10 it is not lawful. The phrase reveals that the Judaism during Jesus’ time had degenerated into pious hypocrisy. Such hypocrisy especially enraged the Lord Jesus (cf. Matt. 22, 23), who used this incident to set up a confrontation with Jewish hyper-legalism and identified the need for national repentance.

5:14 Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you. The basic thrust of Jesus’ comments here indicate that sin has its inevitable consequences (cf. Gal 6:7, 8). Although Scripture makes clear that not all disease is a consequence of sin (cf. 9:1–3; Luke 13:1–5), illness at times may be directly tied into one’s moral turpitude (cf. 1 Cor. 11:29, 30; James 5:15). Jesus may specifically have chosen this man in order to highlight this point.

5:16 persecuted. The verb tense means that the Jews repeatedly persecuted Jesus, i.e., continued hostile activity. This was not an isolated incident of their hatred toward Him because of His healings on the Sabbath (cf. Mark 3:1–6). **on the Sabbath.** Jesus did not break God’s law since in it there was no prohibition of doing good on that day (Mark 2:27). However, Jesus disregarded the oral law of the Jews that had developed, i.e., “the traditions of men” (cf. also Matt. 15:1–9). Most likely, Jesus deliberately practiced such healing on the Sabbath

¹ MacArthur, J., Jr. (Ed.). (1997). *The MacArthur Study Bible* (electronic ed., p. 1586). Nashville, TN: Word Pub.

to provoke a confrontation with their religious hypocrisy that blinded them to the true worship of God (see vv. 17–47 for the main reason for Jesus’ confrontation; *see notes on vv. 10, 11*).

5:17–47 These verses reveal the ultimate reason Jesus confronted the Jews’ religious hypocrisy, i.e., the opportunity to declare who He was. This section is Christ’s own personal statement of His deity. As such, it is one of the greatest Christological discourses in Scripture. Herein Jesus makes 5 claims to equality with God: 1) He is equal with God in His person (vv. 17, 18); 2) He is equal with God in His works (vv. 19, 20); 3) He is equal with God in His power and sovereignty (v. 21); 4) He is equal with God in His judgment (v. 22); and 5) He is equal with God in His honor (v. 23).

5:17 Jesus’ point is that whether he broke the Sabbath or not, God was working continuously and, since Jesus Himself worked continuously, He also must be God. Furthermore, God does not need a day of rest for He never wearies (Is. 40:28). For Jesus’ self-defense to be valid, the same factors that apply to God must also apply to Him. Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath (Matt. 12:8)! Interestingly, even the rabbis admitted that God’s work had not ceased after the Sabbath because He sustains the universe.

5:18 This verse confirms that the Jews instantly grasped the implications of His remarks that He was God (*see notes on v. 17*).

5:19 Most assuredly. Cf. vv. 24, 25; 1:51. This is an emphatic way of saying “I’m telling you the truth.” In response to Jewish hostility at the implications of His assertions of equality with God, Jesus became even more fearless, forceful, and emphatic. Jesus essentially tied His activities of healing on the Sabbath directly to the Father. The Son never took independent action that set Him against the Father because the Son only did those things that were coincident with and co-extensive with all that the Father does. Jesus thus implied that the only One who could do what the Father does must be as great as the Father.

5:20 greater works. This refers to the powerful work of raising the dead. God has that power (cf. 1 Kin. 17:17–24; 2 Kin. 4:32–37; 5:7) and so does the Lord Jesus (vv. 21–29; 11:25–44; 14:19; 20:1–18).

5:23 honor the Son. This verse gives the reason that God entrusted all judgment to the Son (v. 22), i.e., so that all men should honor the Son just as they honor the Father. This verse goes far beyond making Jesus a mere ambassador who is acting in the name of a monarch, but gives Him full and complete equality with the Father (cf. Phil. 2:9–11). **honor the Father.** Jesus turned the tables on the Jewish accusation against Him of blasphemy. Instead, Jesus affirmed that the only way anyone can honor the Father is through receiving the Son. Therefore, the Jews were the ones who actually blasphemed the Father by rejection of His Son.

5:24 passed from death into life. This develops the truth of v. 21, that Jesus gives life to whomever He desires. The people who receive that life are here identified as those who hear the Word and believe in the Father and the Son. They are the people who have eternal life and never will be condemned (Rom. 8:1; Col. 1:13).

5:25–29 The theme of these verses is resurrection. Jesus related that all men, saved and unsaved, will be literally and physically resurrected from the dead. However, only the saved experience a spiritual (“born again”), as well as physical resurrection unto eternal life. The unsaved will be resurrected unto judgment and eternal punishment through separation from God (i.e., the second death; cf. Rev. 20:6, 14; 21:8). These verses also constitute proof of the deity of Jesus Christ since the Son has resurrection power (vv. 25, 26), and the Father has granted Him the status of Judge of all mankind (v. 27). In the light of other Scripture, it is clear that Jesus speaks generally about resurrection, but not about one, general resurrection (*see notes on Dan. 12:2; 1 Cor. 15:23; 1 Thess. 4:16*).

5:25 hour is coming, and now is. Cf. 4:23. This phrase reveals an already/not yet tension regarding the resurrection. Those who are born again are already “spiritually” resurrected (“now is”; Eph. 2:1; Col. 2:13), and yet a future physical resurrection still awaits them (“hour is coming”; 1 Cor. 15:35–54; Phil. 3:20, 21).

5:26 He has granted the Son. The Son from all eternity had the right to grant life (1:4). The distinction involves Jesus’ deity versus His incarnation. In becoming a man, Jesus voluntarily set aside the independent exercise of His divine attributes and prerogatives (Phil. 2:6–11). Jesus here affirmed that even in His humanity, the Father granted Him “life-giving” power, i.e., the power of resurrection (*see note on v. 20*).

5:27 authority. Cf. 17:2; *see note on Matt. 28:18*.

5:29 those who have done good ... evil. Jesus was not teaching justification by works (see 6:29). In the context, the “good” is believing on the Son so as to receive a new nature that produces good works (3:21; James

2:14–20), while the “evil” done is to reject the Son (the unsaved) and hate the light which has the result of evil deeds (3:18, 19). In essence, works merely evidence one’s nature as saved or unsaved (*see notes on Rom. 2:5–10*), but human works never determine one’s salvation.

5:30 the will of the Father. In summarizing all He has said from v. 19 on about His equality with God, Jesus claimed that the judgment He exercised was because everything He did was dependent upon the Father’s word and will (cf. vv. 19, 20).

5:32–47 The background of these verses is Deut. 17:6; 19:15 where witnesses were to establish the truthfulness of a matter (*see note on 1:7*). Jesus Himself emphasized the familiar theme of witnesses who testify to the identity of the Son: 1) John the Baptist (vv. 32–35); 2) Jesus’ works (vv. 35, 36); 3) the Father (vv. 37, 38); and 4) the OT Scriptures (vv. 39–47).

5:36 the very works that I do. Cf. 10:25. The miracles of Jesus were witness to His deity and messiahship. Such miracles are the major signs recorded by John in this gospel, so as to fulfill His purpose in 20:30, 31 (*see Introduction: Historical and Theological Themes*).

5:37 Father ... has testified. Cf. Matt. 3:17; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22.

5:39 You search. Although the verb “search” could also be understood as a command (i.e., “Search the Scriptures!”) most prefer this translation as an indicative. The verb implies diligent scrutiny in investigating the Scriptures to find “eternal life.” However, Jesus points out that with all their fastidious effort, they miserably failed in their understanding of the true way to eternal life through the Son of God (*see notes on Matt. 19:16–25*; cf. 14:6; 2 Tim. 3:15). **testify of Me.** Cf. v. 45. Christ is the main theme of Scripture. *See note on 1:45*.

5:40 not willing. They searched for eternal life, but were not willing to trust its only source (cf. v. 24; 1:11; 3:19).

5:41 honor from men. If Jesus agreed to be the kind of Messiah the Jews wanted, providing miracles and food along with political and military power, He would receive honor from them. But He sought only to please God (vv. 19ff.).

5:43 him you will receive. The Jewish historian, Josephus, records that a string of messianic pretenders arose in the years before A.D. 70. This verse contrasts the Jewish rejection of their true Messiah because they did not love or know God (v. 42), with their willing acceptance of charlatans.

5:46 Moses ... for he wrote about Me. Jesus does not mention any specific passage in the 5 books of Moses although there are many (e.g., Deut. 18:15; cf. 1:21; 4:19; 6:14; 7:40, 52).

6:1–14 The story of the feeding of the 5,000 is the fourth sign John employed to demonstrate that Jesus is the Messiah and Son of God. It is the only miracle recorded in all 4 gospels (Matt. 14:13–23; Mark 6:30–46; Luke 9:10–17). Since John most likely wrote to supplement and provide additional information not recorded in the synoptics (*see Introduction: Background and Setting*), his recording of this miracle emphasized its strategic importance in two ways: 1) it demonstrated the creative power of Christ more clearly than any other miracle, and 2) it decisively supported John’s purposes of demonstrating the deity of Jesus Christ while also serving to set the stage for Jesus’ discourse on the “bread of life” (vv. 22–40). Interestingly, both creative miracles of Jesus, the water into wine (2:1–10) and the multiplying of bread (vv. 1–14) speak of the main elements in the Lord’s supper or communion (v. 53).

6:1 After these things. A large gap of time may exist between chaps. 5 and 6. If the feast in 5:1 is Tabernacles, then at least 6 months passed (Oct. to Apr.). If the feast of 5:1 is Passover, then a year passed between these chapters. **the Sea of Galilee.** Chapter 6 is very close to the same structure as chap. 5 since both occur around a Jewish feast and both lead to a discourse of Jesus’ deity. While chap. 5 takes place in the S around Judea and Jerusalem, chap. 6 takes place in the N around Galilee. The result of both chapters is the same: He is rejected not only in the southern but also in the northern regions. *See note on 21:1*.²

² MacArthur, J., Jr. (Ed.). (1997). *The MacArthur Study Bible* (electronic ed., pp. 1586–1589). Nashville, TN: Word Pub.

verses 17 to 24. This is so profound and so rich and so deep, however, that it's going to take us a couple of weeks to get through just that. It answers the question, "Who is Jesus Christ?"

It comes out in the gospel of John in chapter 8. They call Him a Samaritan which was a label that belonged to unfaithful, apostate outcasts. In chapter 7 and in chapter 8 they say He's possessed by demons. In chapter 10, verse 20, they say He's insane. In chapter 8 verse 41 they say He is a bastard child, He's illegitimate. In **Matthew 12:24** tells us that they finally declared that what He did, He did by the powers of hell...the power of Satan.

If you're going to reject Christ, then reject the Bible. You have to reject it all. If you reject the deity of Jesus Christ, you have just detonated a bomb that has exploded your Bible, throw it away. You have demolished the Bible. There is no such thing as well-intentioned scholarship that denies the deity of Jesus Christ. That is devilish and it disintegrates the Scripture completely. If Jesus is not God, there is no Christianity, the Bible is all a fabrication from hell.

He did it frequently. He did it to the hostile Jews here in chapter 5, again in chapter 6, again in chapter 8 and on many other occasions. He did it with His disciples over and over again, most notably you could see it in **John 16:28**. He made the same declaration of His deity and His heavenly origin even in His high priestly prayer to the Father. So if He's a blasphemer, He carried His blasphemy to His enemies, to His friends, and even to God.

You have to understand that when you study the life of Jesus, He is assumed the prerogatives that belong only to God. He said, for example, that He exercised sovereign control over people's eternal destiny. He said that He had absolute authority over the divine Law of God. He said that He had power supernaturally to answer prayer, that he had authority to forgive sin, that He had absolute control over angels, holy and fallen, that He had power over the Kingdom of God. And He declared that He had the right to be honored and glorified and praised and worshiped and obeyed. Those are prerogatives that belong only to God.

He accepted without correction the title of Son of God, Son of Man, the messianic title, Messiah, King. He took the sacred name of God and applied it to Himself, the I AM, the tetragrammaton I AM over and over again. He referred to Himself as the I AM, the very sacred name of God that a Jew wouldn't even let across his own lips because it was too sacred. Jesus took it and claimed it for Himself. All these lines of testimony, all these lines come together and converge in one escapable truth, Jesus claimed to be God, not to be another God equal to God, but to be God.

The Jews probably thought, at least some of them, that He was claiming to be another God which would have been, of course, preposterous because there was only one true God and the Ten Commandments pronounced judgment on anybody who has another God. Jesus didn't say He was another God, He said, "I and the Father are a unity, we are one." He said in John 14, "If you've seen Me, you've seen the Father." He didn't say I'm another God, He said I am God. I am one with the Father. This is Trinitarian. To say anything other than that about Jesus is to obliterate the teaching of Scripture.

Well if you rush to say that yes God keeps the Law, you now have a problem because what about the Sabbath? Does God rest on the Sabbath? Well somebody might say, “Of course He rests on the Sabbath because in [Genesis 2:2](#) it says that on the seventh day, God...what?...God rested. But I remind you that that, if taken too far, creates a very serious problem because if God isn’t doing anything, every time Saturday comes around, the whole universe collapses. So they had a problem.

Now the Jews had developed 39 categories of behaviors on the Sabbath, 39 categories to kind of restrict behavior. And in order to accommodate God, cause they couldn’t conclude that God didn’t do anything, they knew the sun came up, they knew the wind blew, they knew the rain fell, they knew the grass grew, they knew God continued to do His work of judgment and His work of redemption. They knew God was working on the Sabbath so they had to accommodate God a little bit in their Sabbath Law and they came up with a couple of rules that would kind of work for God. One of them was this, you could carry something but not above your shoulders. On the Sabbath you could carry it here, but you couldn’t put it above your shoulders. If it went over your shoulders, that’s work. So they said, God works on the Sabbath but He does light work. He never really kind of pushes the universe above His shoulders, metaphorically speaking.

And the second rule that they developed to kind of accommodate God, was the idea that you could move something from one place to another in the house but not from one house to another. So if you had a basket of food, you could take it from one room to another room, but you couldn’t take it to the people next door. And they said, God only has one house, the whole universe is His house. There is no other house, so God never does anything from His house to any other house cause there is no other house. So yes, God keeps the Law because He just works in the house and He does light work. I mean, that’s the stupidity to which it had arrived.

Jesus takes a shot at that entire ridiculous discourse when He says, “My Father is working until now. He never stops. He never slows down. He doesn’t do light work. He doesn’t diminish His efforts. He is working—present tense—all the time at the same pace, at the same volume, in the same way. My Father is working.” By the way, it blew their minds that He said, “My Father,” no Jew would ever say that. While they would acknowledge that He was the Father of the nation in terms of creation and covenant promise, no Jew personally would call God his personal Father because that would be way too familiar and because of the way they spoke a father and son having common nature, that might make it seem that they were claiming to have the nature of God and that would be blasphemy. Jesus had no problem saying what they would never say, He said My Father, the One who has the same nature as I have is working until now. He was saying to them the work of God goes on, it goes on all the time. He constantly works to this very second, God works. It’s one of those amazing things that Einstein died and never discovering after all of his work in science, he knew there was a power component somewhere in the midst of the atom that kept the entire universe moving and he never could identify what it was. It is God...it is God. He never rests from His government. He never rests from sustaining the physical world, He never rests from keeping everything in orbit, everything in rotation. He never rests from

His rule. He never rests from His justice judgment. He never rests from His blessing, mercy, grace, love, never rests.

Oh, by the way, [Isaiah 40:28](#) says, “He also never faints and never gets weary.” He doesn’t need to rest. He doesn’t need to rest. When God works, He dissipates no energy.

Oh, by the way, He doesn’t draw His energy from any other source like you do. He is constant, undiminished, eternal, infinite energy. God is working all the time.

And then Jesus says the shocking corollary, “And I Myself am working.” I work at the same level God does. God doesn’t pay any attention to the Sabbath and neither do I. As a man coming into the world, of course. He was there at the feast at this time when He did the healing because He was obedient to the Law of God. And yes, on the Sabbath He did what others did in His humanity. But in His deity, He never stopped working. And according to Hebrews chapter 1, in one of the most remarkable statements ever said about Him, it says that speaking of Christ, He upholds all things by the word of His power. That is the ministry of sustaining the universe.

In [John 1:1](#) it says He created the universe. In Hebrews 1 it says that He sustains the universe. So there is Jesus standing there, looking at those men, talking to them. And He at the same time is holding together the entire universe. He is claiming then to be the same nature as God, the same essence as God. God continues to do His work. I continue to do My work. God is never restrained. His work is never diminished because it is a Sabbath, and neither is My work. Sabbath has no application for God. It has no application for the divine work of Jesus. He is the Lord of the Sabbath and He made the Sabbath for man.

Now the Jews knew exactly what He was saying and this is so outrageous it’s beyond comprehension. He is saying that as the eternal God does His work all the time, so He is claiming to do the same thing, to work the same pattern that God works. Verse 18, “For this reason, therefore, the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He was not only breaking the Sabbath but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God.

Jesus goes to the pool of Bethsaida on a Sabbath, He finds a man there who has been 38 years with some kind of infirmity. The man believes in a local superstition that if somebody gets in the water first when the water bubbles, that person is going to be healed. How that superstition developed, we don’t know, but he can’t get there because his infirmity debilitates him. Jesus comes along, he doesn’t know who He is, has no idea, says, “Pick up your bed and walk.” He picks up his bed and walks, instantaneously, completely, and fully healed. The man walks away. It’s a Sabbath day.

The Jewish leaders castigate Jesus for doing that on a Sabbath. They say He violated the Sabbath by working on the Sabbath doing that healing as if it were work. Jesus goes to the

Temple to find the man after the man leaves. He went by the Temple, no doubt, to offer thanks to God. Jesus finds him in the Temple, sits down with him, and at that point reveals Himself to him, we can assume that, and closes the conversation by saying to the man, “Go and sin no more, you’ve got to repent, you’ve got to deal with your sin.” And I’m sure that was just the final statement. He wasn’t saying to him, “Go and fix yourself.” Jesus knew the man could not stop sinning on his own. When Jesus said “Go and sin no more,” He was simply reiterating with a final warning that you better turn from your sin and embrace salvation. I’m sure He gave him a full gospel presentation. The man didn’t follow Jesus, the man went right back to the Jewish leaders and turned Jesus in so they could find Jesus. That’s the bondage of false religion.

Here’s a man 38 years with an infirmity, Jesus comes along, delivers him on one day and the man so bound by that false religion doesn’t follow Jesus, goes right back to the system of which he is a part. That’s a...that’s a microcosm for the whole nation. He was healing people everywhere all the time through the three years of His ministry who were just going back into the system. That’s because the god of this world invented that form of Judaism to hold people bondage...in bondage.

Number one, He is equal to God in nature. Verse 17, “He answered them, ‘My Father is working until now and I Myself am working.’” He says “My Father,” and they go ballistic. No Jew would call God His Father because in their view, father and son share the same life principles, share the same essence. Jesus is saying, “I am of the same nature as God.”

Secondly, in verses 19 and 20 He declared Himself to be equal with God in works. Therefore Jesus answered and was saying to them, “Truly, truly I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself unless it is something He sees the Father doing, for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner.” We talked about that a couple of weeks ago. He and His Father are one in nature, and they are therefore one in function, one in duty, one in work. The Son can do nothing of Himself. In other words, He doesn’t operate independently from God. Every human being operates independently from God. We couldn’t possibly blame God for everything we do. No human being could say, “Whatever God does, I do and that’s all I do, I only do what God does, I do nothing else.”

Thirdly, this is where we left off, Jesus claims to be equal to God in power...equal to God in power. Now there are a lot of ways to talk about power. We use the word “power” for all kinds of things. But this is the ultimate power. Notice this, verse 21, “For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son also gives life to whom He wishes.”

What is the ultimate power in the universe? What is it? The ability to do what? Give life. That’s the ultimate power, to give life. The Father gives life. Acts 17, Paul on Mars Hill talking about God who gives life and breath to all. God in whom we live and move and have our existence and have our being. But remember John 1 which said, concerning the Word who is Christ, “That nothing was made that wasn’t made by Him because in Him was life.” This is the ultimate power.

It is characteristic of the eternal God that He has life as an attribute, underived, underived, uncaused...uncaused. This is the doctrine of divine aseity...divine equal, from the Latin, aseity, from Himself. You live because you derived life. You were given life by your parents and they by their parents and it all goes back to a point in time when there was no life, except the triune God who is the eternal life and He gave life to everything. And it came in many forms. We talk about biological life. We understand what that is in the world of biology, that would include humans and all of the animate living creation. There is even inanimate life. If you look at this pulpit or the floor or the static building that you see or anything else that isn't obviously moving, you might consider that that thing doesn't have life, but oh does it have life, it is in motion at an incalculable speed and incalculable complexity as the atoms that make up what you think is static are moving endlessly, driven by an internal energy which is invisible and incalculable and imperceptible.

There is also that other invisible life which is spiritual life which we can't see in each other but which is evident. All of that life, the whole of the universe whether it is apparently inanimate, or animate, invisible is all from God who made everything, or from Christ without whom nothing was made that was made. Here is this Galilean carpenter standing there saying that He is the one who has created the entire universe and He gives life only to whomever He wishes. Nothing exists that He didn't wish to exist. Nothing came into existence by any random process...nothing. He is equal to God in power and at the ultimate level which is the ability to make something live, make something exist that previously did not exist.

Equal I nature, equal in works, equal in power, equal in authority, equal in honor and equal in truth...equal in truth. This takes us to verse 24. "Truly, truly I say to you, he who hears My Word and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life." Hears and believes are one and the same. When He says "He who hears My words," He means hear it with faith. And then says, "And believes assumes you heard." How could you believe if you hadn't heard? So that's just...those are just synonyms. What it says here is to have eternal life, you have to hear and believe My Word and you have to hear and believe the Word of Him who sent Me. That is to say, you must believe what came from God and what came from Christ. To make it real simple, the Old and the New Testament. It's not enough to believe the Old Testament and stop at that point. In fact, Jesus uses truly, truly again, that little formula appears 25 times in the gospel of John. You already saw it back in verse 19. And Jesus used it because He was saying things to them that were true against the backdrop of their deception and the lies that they believed. And it's a statement for the purpose of being emphatic, "Truly, truly I say to you, eternal life, which is escape from judgment, deliverance from condemnation, eternal life comes to those who hear and believe My Word and who hear and believe the Word of Him who sent Me." Those are the people who have eternal life, those are the people who do not come into judgment but are passed out of death into life. You escape judgment, you escape eternal death only when you believe what the Father says and what the Son says because they both speak the same truth.

All the teaching, all the claims, all the commands that come from Christ, all the revelation concerning Christ that fills the New Testament, all the revelation, all the claims, all the

commands, all the truths, all the doctrines, all the realities from the Father that make up the Old Testament, that point to Christ and to the need of man, they all must be believed cause they're equal in truth. Anybody who says that Jesus is inferior to God, fails to understand all of this and puts his eternal soul in jeopardy. To say, as the Mormons do, that Jesus is a created spirit brother of Lucifer who was created by a god who was created by another god is a damning heresy. If there are any Mormons here today, listening to this, my fear is that just like the Jews, you will hear everything I say and you will run back into the bondage of the corrupt system that holds you captive. You must flee. This is the truth. This is the truth.

This is not just John's record of what Jesus said as if it sort of stands isolated in the New Testament. Let me close by taking you to Hebrews chapter 1. Hebrews chapter 1. This sounds like an echo of [John 5:17](#) to 24. We said equal in truth, listen to this, "God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets, in many portions and in many ways..." Okay, that's how God spoke in the Old Testament. In many portions, in many different ways, He spoke through visions, voices from heaven, spoke through the *urim and thummin* on the breast of the High Priest. He spoke sometimes through lots, he spoke through dreams, he spoke directly to prophets and writers of Holy Scripture, in many ways, in many different portions. In these last days has spoken to us in His Son. This is the presentation of Christ. The prophets revealed God but Jesus reveals God fully. In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.

The prophets received many portions and in many ways the truth about God. It was a fragmentary revelation of God. Jesus is the full revelation of God. In Him God did not display some facets of Himself, but fully reveals Himself. We see the glory of God shining in the face of Jesus...Paul says. In these last days, that is the days in which the Lord has come, God speaks to us in His Son. In Christ, the revelation of God is full, it is complete. Not in the drifting hues and separated colors of the Old Testament, but in the pure blazing light, uniting in one person the whole spectrum of divine revelation. Christ is God revealed in His fullness.

And then He goes on to say He is the heir of all things. He is the one through whom He made the world. He is the radiance of His glory, the exact representation of His nature, upholds all things by the Word of His power. He's the one who made purification of sins and then He sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high.

The writer of Hebrews is saying the Son, Christ, is the end of all things. That is He's the heir. He is the beginning of all things, He is the creator. He is the center of all things, He upholds everything by the Word of His power. He is the beginning. He is the end, the Alpha and the Omega. He is also the middle. He appointed Him, His Son, heir of all things. All things were made by Him and for Him, for Him. He is the one who takes the title deed in the book of Revelation and takes back the universe as His own. He is the ultimate heir of everything because He is the Creator of everything. It was through Him that the world was made.

By the way, the word “world” is often *kosmos* in the Greek. It is not such here. It is the word *aiones*(?). *Aiones* doesn't technically mean world. It means ages. It is stressing the fact that He didn't just make the world, that is to say the earth and the complex systems of life that are here. This is not strictly the physical earth, but is a reference to the fact that He has created ages. That is to say He has created time and space and force and energy and matter and everything. He is the Creator of absolutely everything. He is the Creator of the incalculable microcosm of the universe, stunning, incomprehensible creation. He's the Creator of your heart that beats 800 million times in a lifetime. He made it all.

He is also the radiance of the glory of God. What do we understand by that? *Apaugasma*, brightness, He puts God on display. He's called in John 1 the light, right? We talked about that. He is the light.

How are we to understand that He is the light that shines from God? Maybe you can understand it this way. The radiance of the sun reaches the earth, lights the earth, warms the earth, gives life and growth to the earth. So in Christ, the glorious light of God shines into the hearts of men, produces light and life. The brightness of the sun is the same as the sun. It is as old as the sun. The brightness of the sun has always been with the sun, never was the sun without its brightness. The brightness of the sun cannot be separated from the sun and yet the brightness of the sun is not the sun. Maybe in some way that illustrates how Christ is the brightness of God. Without the sun there is no light. He said, “I am the light of the world,” [John 8:12](#). So He is God on display...the glory of God shining in the face of Christ.

Further describing who He is, He is the exact representation of His nature...the exact substance of God's nature. He is what God is. There is no difference. He is the essence of God.

You know, it's just so parallel, it reminds us of one of the great doctrines of Scripture called *analogia scriptura*. And that is to say Scripture is analogous to itself, when compared with itself, it will be found to be absolutely true and consistent.

He is the one, also, according to verse 3, who upholds all things by the Word of His power. Compare [Colossians 1:17](#)...[Colossians 1:17](#). “He is before all things and in Him all things hold together.” He holds the universe together. He created it, He's the end of it, it will all resolve in His glory and He sustains it, supporting it, just beyond comprehension. If the earth's rotation slowed down a little bit, we would alternately freeze and burn. If the surface temperature of the sun was a little hotter or a little cooler, we would all alternately freeze and burn.

If the globe which is tilted on its axis in an exact angle of 23 degrees, were altered, we would lose our seasons. Vapors from the ocean would move north and south and pile up continents of ice everywhere. If the moon didn't remain at an exact distance from the earth, the ocean tide would inundate the land completely twice a day. If the ocean slipped to a few feet deeper than it is carbon dioxide and the oxygen in the earth's atmosphere would be completely absorbed and no vegetable life could exist. If the atmosphere didn't remain

constant, but thinned out, meteors which explode harmlessly when they enter the atmosphere would hit the earth and we would be constantly bombarded to death.

Who holds all this in a delicate balance? That Galilean carpenter standing there looking at those Jews that day. This is who He is. And, says the writer, when He made purification of sin, when He did His work on the cross and rose from the dead, He went to take His rightful place and sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high, right where He belonged, the very place from which He came