

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

16. The Truth About Jesus

John 5:15-47

Let's begin with a super brief reminder of what we've been studying. The Gospel According to John is not a biography. It is not an exhaustive account of the life and works of Jesus. It is a divinely curated collection of specific moments, events, words and works of Jesus **so that** the readers (you and I) **might believe that** Jesus is the Messiah (the true and forever King), the Son of God — and that **by believing** we might **have life** in his name ([John 20:30-31](#))

WE DON'T WANT TO MISS THIS — When John speaks of “life” he is talking about a life that transcends the ways any culture defines life. It is life that can never be supplied by any created thing. John is speaking about the life we were created to experience in fellowship with our creator. John says that this life is received and experienced by faith in Jesus.

Each of us is believing in something, trusting in something or someone, and the object of our faith is taking us somewhere! It's taking us further into life or further into death, now and forever.

Before we go any farther in our study of John Chapter 5 we want to stop (literally) and ask ourselves, *“Do I really have life in Jesus' name? Am I experiencing a kind of love, hope and peace that I can commend to others?”* I pray that as we do this each of us would take up John's offer to believe, to center or even recenter our lives around Jesus the Messiah, the son of God, in order that we might experience life, true living, in his name!

As we pick up in [John 5](#) we come to a teaching moment that was set up by a miracle that Jesus performed at the Pool of Bethesda in which He healed a man who had been a paralytic for 38 years.

REMEMBER — John calls these miracles “SIGNS.” He uses that word because a sign points to something beyond itself. This particular sign was intended to point to Jesus as being the Son of God, equal in nature and power with God the Father.

The response to the religious rulers is not what one would expect — there was no amazement; no awe, no gladness for the man who has suffered as a cripple for 38 years.

Instead, they condemned the man for breaking their man-made regulations regarding work on the Sabbath.

John 5:10 (ESV) ¹⁰*So the Jews said to the man who had been healed, “It is the Sabbath, and it is not lawful for you to take up your bed.”*

They looked at this guy and they were more concerned about the burden he was carrying than the burden that God had lifted from him.

The man who was healed said — *“I’m just doing what the guy who healed me told me to do.”*

They responded to that with a very strange, but telling question. They didn’t ask: “Who is this man who performed this mighty, compassionate miracle?” They weren’t interested in this miraculous act of rescuing mercy and compassion. Instead, they asked: “Who is this man who would dare tell you to break our Sabbath regulations?”

The healed man was clueless as to the identity of the man who healed him.

John 5:14-18 *Afterward Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, “See, you are well! Sin no more, that nothing worse may happen to you.” The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had healed him.*

¹⁶**And this was why the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because he was doing these things on the Sabbath.**

In their estimation Jesus cannot possibly be good, he cannot be a prophet or teacher from God, because He had transgressed their deepest cultural and religious observations and convictions.

The response of Jesus is HUGE!!

John 5:17 (ESV) ¹⁷But Jesus answered them, “My Father is working until now, and I am working.”

FIRST — Jesus gets to the heart of the Sabbath

If healing a man on the Sabbath was a sin, then the Father was to blame! Jesus tells them that God was working on the Sabbath. Genesis tells us that God rested on the 7th day from the work of creation.

HUGE SIDE NOTE HERE — The zenith of the creation narrative is not the creation of man — the image bearer of God. The zenith of the creation narrative is day seven — Man living in perfect communion with God in the perfect garden. THAT is so important of us to know because THAT is the exactly where the story of redemption is leading — Redeemed man living in perfect communion with his Redeeming Creator in a new heaven and a new earth — forever! Genesis 1-2 and Revelation 21-22 are crucial to understanding everything else between them in the Bible

So — God didn’t rest because He was tired.

Isaiah 40:28 Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary;

The Bible clearly says that God doesn’t need sleep or rest

Psalms 121:4 He who keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.

Jesus would say — “*The Sabbath was made for man...(Mark 2:27)*”.

The fact that God rested on the seventh day was for the benefit of man who was created to bear the image of the creator!

“Both rest and work are faithful activities for image bearers. In work we apply our energy to making something of the world; in rest we echo

God's satisfied declaration "Behold, it was good," and renew our strength by acknowledging our dependence on God rather than ourselves." ~ Andy Crouch

In His infinite wisdom our creator tells us that we need to set aside a day in which we refrain from our labors, our creative work, our good works.

"Without remembering the sabbath, we cease to remember the Creator God who made the world and called it good; we cease to remember the one who brought us out of Egypt; we cease to remember the Eighth Day when God defeated death. We also cease to remember our future: that the end of the human story is a gift rather than an achievement. Sabbath requires us to "mark time," to stand still and pay attention to the unearned and infinite grace that is our origin and destiny." ~ Andy Crouch

SECOND — God has never ceased working in affairs of man.

QUOTE: J.C. Ryle — Jesus is saying — "Though my Father rested on the seventh day from His work of *creation*, He has never rested for a moment from His *providential government* of the world, and from His merciful work of supplying the daily needs of all His creatures.

MOST IMPORTANTLY — from the Fall of Man in **Genesis 3** — God has **never** been inactive in the work of redeeming man from the power and penalty of sin; from the work of bringing the Redeemer into the world. Ever since the fall of man, God has been seeking lost sinners and saving them.

God himself **never** ceases, night or day, to work in bringing His redemption to nations — to peoples — to individuals in desperate need of healing and rescue.

HERE'S THE POINT — The men who were supposed to be most clear on the nature and work of God were totally in the dark about the HEART of God and the WORK of God in the world.

Here is the core of the Gospel — The Gospel is about the WORK of God to save man. Jesus is God who became man — God among us — WORKING to save men from the power and penalty of sin — God among us SEEKING TO SAVE that which was lost!

Instead of really connecting this incredible miracle and the other signs that Jesus had performed with the works that God himself was doing , we're told that

¹⁸.... the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.

Would you note with me that the Jews fully understood that Jesus was a man claiming to be God; not like Caesar who claimed to be one of many gods in the pantheon of Roman pagan gods. They understood perfectly well that Jesus was claiming to be equal in nature and power with the God of Israel. They sought to kill Jesus because he was constantly making himself equal with God.

QUOTE: Augustine of Hippo (354 – 430) One of the leading thinkers of the western world — *"Behold, the Jews understand what the Arians do not understand."*

A man named Arius held the position that Jesus was not co-eternal and con-substantial with the Father

INSIGHT: The Jehovah's Witnesses are the contemporary expression of the Arian heresy — denying the deity of Jesus.

The Jews understood Jesus much better than the Jehovah Witnesses or the Mormons or other groups who would make Jesus something less than God. (For further study on the subject of the Trinity and the Nature of Jesus reference Credo Study "TRINITY " which deals with the subject of the Trinity and the major heresies concerning the Trinity and the nature of Jesus).

DON'T MISS THIS — Instead of denying their accusation, or saying they misunderstood Him He reasserts His relationship with the God of Israel by saying to them —

¹⁹... **“Truly, truly, I say to you,**

We find Jesus saying this more than twenty times in John’s Gospel.

When Jesus says, *“Truly, truly,”* He is challenging us to believe His word over and above any other teacher or teaching.

By making such claims we are only left with three possibilities concerning Jesus — He is a liar, a lunatic — or He really is God who became man.

...the Son can do nothing of his own accord,

Jesus, God the Son, does nothing independently. He is fully submitted to the Father’s will. This submission is not by coercion, nor does it flow from an inferior nature. There is EQUALITY *and* DEFERENCE within the Trinity.

¹⁹ **...but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise.**

More literally — The son can do nothing of His own accord, but only what he IS SEEING the father do.

This is what I am seeing My Father doing today —ON THE SABBATH — and that’s what I am doing.

The reason this man picked up his bed and walked is because that’s what the Father was doing at that very moment.

For what things the Father IS DOING — these also the son IS DOING likewise.

So, if we want to know what the heart of the Father looks like — what the Father is up to — Look at Jesus.

²⁰For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing.

Jesus looks at these men who want to KILL Him and he says — *I'm not doing anything except that which I am seeing the Father do right now, and what He is doing, that's what I am doing. The father loves me.*

REMARKABLE!

²⁰For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing. And greater works than these will he show him, so that you may marvel.

You aint seen nothing yet!

Jesus has many more works to do in concert with the Father!

But he doesn't stop at calling God His Father. He reasserts His claim to be God by claiming to have the authority and power that the monotheistic Jew knew to belong to God alone!

1.) THE POWER TO GIVE LIFE

²¹For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will.

Jesus is claiming he is God and that he possesses the divine power to give life and deal with death

2.) THE POWER TO JUDGE

²²The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son,

He says that ALL judgment belongs to Him.

To the orthodox Jew, Yahweh was *"the Judge of all the earth"* (Gen. 18:25). By claiming to be the Judge, He claimed to be God.

(Acts 17:31) "Because He [God] hath appointed a day in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained".

I see heads exploding here!

3.) THE POSITION OF HONOR

²²The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son, that

Here's why all of that is so

²³that 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.

QUOTE: A.T. Robertson — *"Jesus claims the same right to worship from men that the Father has."*

Think about this — Jesus was talking to men who treasured the book of Psalms as the divinely inspired hymnal for the nation of Israel. Jesus is telling these men that they should give to Him the same praise, honor and adoration reserved for YHWH in in the book of Psalms!

MORE EXPLODING HEADS!

DON'T MISS THIS — Jesus says — *you can't honor God without honoring the son. It's impossible.*

QUOTE: Dave Guzik — *There are many groups that pretend to honor God but they dishonor Jesus, who is the perfect revelation of God the Father. In this, they demonstrate that they do not honor God the Father at all.*

4.) THE POWER TO RAISE THE DEAD

²⁴Truly, truly, I say to you,

For a second time — Jesus prefaces a claim to deity with the words *truly, truly I say to you.*

²⁴Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.

REMEMBER John's purpose statement:

John 20:31 (ESV) ³¹but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that **by believing** you may have **life in his name.**

Apart from faith in Jesus we are the walking dead.

Ephesians 2:1 And you were dead in the trespasses and sins ²in which you once walked,

Colossians 2:13 And you, who were dead in your trespasses

The unrepentant family values man or woman is as dead in their trespasses and sins as the most immoral person.

How are dead sinners raised from the dead?

whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me

By hearing God's Word — By hearing and believing on God's Son.

AGAIN — THE TENSE of these verbs is crucial.

“has Everlasting life” = Presently, right here and now, has life that endures forever.

If you're a born again Christian, you're not **going** to have eternal life someday in the future when you go to heaven, you have it now. That's what has ruined you for the world organizing itself without God and against God. You *have eternal life*.

“has passed from death to life” = passed permanently, from death unto life. That's GREAT NEWS!

If you are a Christian — you may be a knucklehead, you may be wrestling with back sliding — you may be wrestling with besetting sins — you may struggle with your theology — you may not understand everything in the scripture — but one thing is true — you have **permanently** passed from death unto life.

When you exercise genuine faith in Jesus you can **never** be separated from God again — nor can you **ever** come into judgment (**Rom. 8:1**).

NEVER and EVER are HUGE words!

MY HEAD is EXPLODING on this one!

BOTTOM LINE — To hear His Word and believe means salvation; to reject His Word means condemnation (**John 12:48**).

Next Jesus is going to say: *If you think it's a big deal to see a lame man get up and carry his mat, you ain't seen nothing yet.*

²⁵**Truly, truly, I say to you**

AGAIN — *Truly, truly I say to you.*

²⁵**Truly, truly, I say to you an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live.**

This was no doubt a reference to at least three specific occasions

the only son of a widow in town called Nain had died

*Luke 7:14–15 (ESV) ¹⁴Then he came up and touched the bier, and the bearers stood still. And he said, “Young man, **I say to you, arise.**”
¹⁵And the dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him to his mother.*

The only daughter of a man named Jairus had died

*Luke 8:54–55 (ESV) ⁵⁴But taking her by the hand **he called, saying, “Child, arise.”** ⁵⁵And her spirit returned, and she got up at once. And he directed that something should be given her to eat.*

And central to the Gospel of John — his dear friend Lazarus who lived in Bethany was dead and buried for four days

John 11:25–27 (ESV) ²⁵Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life.... ²⁶.... Do you believe this?” ²⁷She said to him, “Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world.”

*John 11:43–44 (ESV) ⁴³When he had said these things, **he cried out with a loud voice**, “Lazarus, come out.” ⁴⁴The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, “Unbind him, and let him go.”*

From that moment forward the Gospel of John moves towards the death and resurrection of Jesus.

***John 12:9-11** When the large crowd of the Jews learned that Jesus was there, they came, not only on account of him but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. ¹⁰So the chief priests made plans to put Lazarus to death as well, ¹¹because on account of him many of the Jews were going away and believing in Jesus.*

BUT there is a very real way in which **you and I** are included in this too. We were *dead in trespasses and sins*. We heard his voice. He spoke His Word to us and made us alive.

Every follower of Jesus has a testimony. Our testimony is that we were dead and we heard the voice of the son of God — and now we are alive! A very dear friend of mine — Romaine — he's in heaven now — said — *"There's only one testimony, I was a jerk, I was going to hell and God saved me. Everything else is details."*

But our testimony doesn't end at that moment. He not only saved us — He's kept us. And, He's gracious to us, and He fellowships with us.

Think of it — *"Hear My word and have everlasting life."* This is either the babbling of an insane man or the words of God Himself. There is no neutral ground to be found here.

²⁶For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself.

Again — we are tethered to the Prologue. *"In Him was life" (John 1:4).*

QUOTE: Warren Wiersbe — *Our life is derived, but His life is original, "in Himself."*

The grave could not hold Him because He is *"the Prince of Life" (Acts 2:24 ; 3:15).*

Jesus said — **(John 10:17-18).** *For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. ¹⁸No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again.*

Because He has life in Himself, He can give that life to all who will trust Him.

AGAIN — To hear His Word and believe means salvation; to reject His Word means condemnation.

Jesus has claimed to be God who has the ability to give divine life; who holds absolute authority over death itself — who holds absolute authority to deal justly with every injustice (“judgment”).

Even though these men want to kill Him for making such claims he continues to appeal to them. He calls **FIVE witnesses** that endorse Him as the long awaited Messiah, and Son of God

John 5:31–47 (ESV) ³¹If I alone bear witness about myself, my testimony is not true. ³²There is **another** who bears witness about me, and I know that the testimony that he bears about me is true.

1. Jesus first says that there is **"another"** who bears witness to him and his witness is true. This is the same word that Jesus will use in **John 14:16** to describe the Holy Spirit. So His first witness is the Holy Spirit at work in the hearts of men and women testifying and showing that Jesus is true — that He is the long awaited Savior that the world has been waiting for since **Genesis 3**.

2. Next Jesus asks them to Consider the witness of **John the Baptist**.

³³You sent to John, and he has borne witness to the truth. ³⁴Not that the testimony that I receive is from man, but I say these things so that you may be saved. ³⁵He was a burning and shining lamp, and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light.

We remember how back in Chapter 1 the religious leaders sent delegates all the way from Jerusalem to ask John if he was the Messiah. John clearly stated that he was not the Messiah — that he was the one promised by the prophets to prepare the way for the LORD. He pointed everyone away from Himself and literally pointed and Jesus and said, *“Behold the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”* He is the one upon whom the spirit remains. He is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire — HE is the Son of God.

But that's not all.

3. Jesus says that **His works bear witness** that the Father has sent him.

³⁶But the testimony that I have is greater than that of John. For the works that the Father has given me to accomplish, the very works that I am doing, bear witness about me that the Father has sent me.

Each of the works that Jesus did are works of restoration, of healing, of giving life. ALL His works are associated with the work that the prophets said would happen when God once again reigns as king on the earth: Restoration, the banishment of evil, sin, and demonic powers. In the works of Jesus the kingdom of God is present.

4. Jesus that **the Father Himself** bears witness to him.

³⁷And the Father who sent me has himself borne witness about me.

Of course we know, though not recorded in this Gospel, that at Jesus' baptism the Father spoke over Jesus — "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased."

But the religious rulers don't know the Father.

His voice you have never heard, his form you have never seen,

Jesus is God incarnate — (1:18; 14:9) — yet the most religious men in Israel do not see God in Jesus.

5. Finally — **The witness of Scripture**

³⁸and you do not have his word abiding in you,

His word does not find a home in their hearts.

Jesus' language harks back to the OT depiction of a God-fearing individual as someone who has the Word of God dwelling in his or her heart. Joshua (Josh. 1:8–9) and the psalmist (Ps. 119:11) are both characterized in this way. New Testament saints correspondingly are exhorted to let the word of Christ dwell in them richly (Col. 3:16). By contrast, Jesus' Jewish opponents do not have God's word dwelling in them, ¹

for you do not believe the one whom he has sent. ³⁹You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me,

This is a radical statement — Jesus said that He is the main character of the Biblical story; that He is the culmination of the Biblical story. He said that it is all ultimately about him; it's continually pointing to Him and finds its fulfillment in Him.

Andreas Kostenburger — *What is required, rather, is an understanding of Scripture's true (christological) orientation and purpose. Not merely are individual sayings of Scripture fulfilled in Jesus; Scripture in its entirety is oriented toward him* ²

In that light —

The sabbath is not just about physical rest or a day off.

Manna is not about having your stomach filled. We'll see in our next study (John chapter 6:31) a story about misunderstanding and misapplying the bread that fed the multitudes.

Those things are not ends in themselves — they are about God offering himself to us as the source and substance of the life we were made for and long for — God offering Himself as the rest and peace our souls long for — God offering Himself as the true nourishment and satisfaction for our lives. And all of this is offered to us in Christ Jesus

¹ Köstenberger, A. J. (2004). John (p. 193). Baker Academic.

² Köstenberger, A. J. (2004). John (p. 193). Baker Academic.

THINK ABOUT THIS (and it is totally relevant to church culture in America today). The commitment of the religious rulers to studying the Torah was legendary. These men devoted themselves to pouring over the scriptures memorizing them using them as a light and guide for their life — and yet — they missed the whole point?

HOW does THAT happen?

There is way to read and study scripture that misses the main character and the main point!

First — We need to remember that the Bible is not about the Bible. It is not to be treated as theological / religious information that is disconnected from God and His story.

The words printed on the pages of my Bible give witness to the living and active revelation of the God of creation and salvation, the God of love who became the Word made flesh in Jesus, and I had better not forget it. If in my Bible reading I lose touch with this livingness, if I fail to listen to this living Jesus, submit to this sovereignty, and respond to this love, I become arrogant in my knowing and impersonal in my behavior. An enormous amount of damage is done in the name of Christian living by bad Bible reading. Caveat lector, let the reader beware.” - Eugene Peterson, Eat This Book, A Conversation in the Art of Spiritual Reading

Second — We need to remember that while the Bible is most definitely written **for** you and me — it is most definitely not **about** you and me. It doesn't begin with man and work towards God. It begins with God — literally! *In the beginning God* — or in the language of John 1:1, *In the beginning was the Word*. The Bible is about God who comes to rescue us — deliver us from what sin has done in our lives and in this world — and make the way for us to be who he created us to be.

The point of the scriptures is to know God, through Jesus Christ — to know and understand history and humanity from God's point of view — not as a spectator — but to be brought into God's great story.

⁴⁰yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.

D. A. Carson — *That refusal constitutes evidence that they are not reading their Scriptures as they were meant to be read. No independence is more arrogant and more delusive than religious independence, which reaches its tragic apogee when the central meaning of Scripture is perverted.*³

Jesus is essentially telling these men that they had reduced the very Word of God to a moral code by which they would earn the approval of God and a place in His Kingdom.

Jesus reveals the root of the problem:

⁴¹I do not receive glory from people. ⁴²But I know that you do not have the love of God within you. ⁴³I have come in my Father's name, and you do not receive me. If another comes in his own name, you will receive him. ⁴⁴How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?

They were resisting Jesus — and ultimately wanting to kill Jesus because their religious activity and leadership was about their own honor and glory.

Being caught up in the story of God for the glory of God requires participation in His story — it requires saying with our lives “*Your Kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*”

The power of the Holy Spirit at work through the Word of God is transformational (Romans 12:2). Christ is formed in our lives more fully, more completely. More and more His ways — which were always about the will of the Father and the glory of the Father — become our ways.

⁴⁵Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father. There is one who accuses you: Moses, on whom you have set your hope.

³ Carson, D. A. (1991). *The Gospel according to John* (p. 264). Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans.

Moses accuses them, because Moses wrote about Jesus and they won't receive the testimony of Moses.⁴

⁴⁶For if you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me.

⁴⁷But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words?"

Are we so involved in "Bible study" that we fail to see Jesus Christ in the Word? Does our knowledge of the Bible give us a "big head" or a "burning heart"?⁵

COMMUNION

The bread and the cup remind us that the One the Bible is all about was wounded for our transgressions and crushed for our iniquities — that He washed us and redeemed us from our sins with His shed blood. Three days after His death on the cross he conquered death. That is not theological information disconnected from the story of God.

As we come to the table, let us remember that we are coming to the living Christ. The Jesus of John 5 desires to meet us in the exact moment that we find ourselves.

He offers his fullness for our emptiness. His love for our loneliness. His forgiveness for our burdens and sins; his comfort for our fears and failures. His presence for the journey before us. So this morning as we come to the table, let us remember that we are coming to the living Christ, and allow him to do his deep transformative work in us.

Char Brodersen

⁴ Guzik, D. (2013). *John* (Jn 5:45–47). David Guzik.

⁵ Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Vol. 1, p. 309). Victor Books.