

“Jesus – The God, A God, or God the Son?”

John 5:1-30

November 16, 2008

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He is the most controversial figure in human history.

He alone causes the greatest devotion and the greatest division among people.

He is what separates Christianity from the other religions and philosophies of the world.

In most contexts, even speaking his name raises suspicions.

You can speak of religion and you can even speak of God but speak of this person and it is often assumed that you are one of those who claims exclusive truth.

The more you use this name, the more you alienate yourself from the world around you. (Gary Burge, *John*, 185)

Sadly even many Christians find this name to be an embarrassment.

They will use this name as an exclamation in frustration or anger, but are embarrassed to say this name seriously.

They will speak of “the man upstairs,” “the big man,” maybe even “God,” or “the Lord,” but they have a hard time saying this intimate, personal name outside of church.

Why? It defines us too narrowly; we sense that using his name is perceived as drawing a circle that includes some and excludes others.

To speak this name might say something about us that we are afraid others will find objectionable.

Yes, the name is Jesus.

Please remember that hardly anyone denies he actually lived.

Most everyone knows Jesus was a man who lived in Israel/Palestine during the time of the Roman Empire.

Few would contest that he came teaching about God.

And again most would agree that he gained quite a following while he was here.

Many around the world, even to this day, have respect for some of his teachings.

Muslims, Hindus and many of the more modern religions consider him to have been a great religious teacher.

And of course it is also true that for two thousand years many Christians have claimed that Jesus is not only a great religious figure but that he is also divine – That Jesus is God.

And that is the rub!

- That's what will get you in trouble in your comparative religions course.
- That's what will alienate you from your Jewish or Muslim co-workers.
- That's what will create real awkwardness in any serious discussion you have about religion and life.

Most want to say Jesus was a good man.

Some want to say that he is God.

But who does Jesus say he is?

I hope that after today, whenever you think of the identity of Jesus, whenever you have a discussion about Jesus around the water cooler at work or in a dorm room at college, you will remember John chapter 5.

I want you to forever remember Jesus' own claims about his true identity so that you won't ever again sell him short.

Now, of course, you can decide whether to believe him or not, but I hope you never again misunderstand what he said about himself.

Now many of you are already Christ-followers and you might be thinking, "I know Jesus claimed to be God and I believe him, so this sermon is going to be a bit redundant for me. Maybe I'll just read the bulletin."

To hopefully intrigue you to look more closely at John 5 with me, I have questions of you about your understanding of who Jesus truly is:

- When you say "Jesus is God," do you mean that Jesus is the only God or do you mean that there are two Gods, Jesus and God?
- And when you say "Jesus is the Son of God," do you mean that God is the big God and Jesus is the little God or the junior God?

"No," you say, "I believe in the Trinity – God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit."

Then I ask you, are the Jews and Muslims then correct that you believe in three Gods?

Let's listen to Jesus define himself.

John 5:1-30 "Some time later, Jesus went up to Jerusalem for a feast of the Jews. ² Now there is in Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate a pool, which in Aramaic is called Bethesda and which is surrounded by five covered colonnades. ³ Here a great number of disabled people used to lie—the blind, the lame, the paralyzed. ⁵ One who was there had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. ⁶ When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, "Do you want to get well?" ⁷ "Sir," the invalid replied, "I have no one to help me into the pool

when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me.”⁸ Then Jesus said to him, “Get up! Pick up your mat and walk.”⁹ At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked. The day on which this took place was a Sabbath,¹⁰ and so the Jews said to the man who had been healed, “It is the Sabbath; the law forbids you to carry your mat.”¹¹ But he replied, “The man who made me well said to me, ‘Pick up your mat and walk.’”¹² So they asked him, “Who is this fellow who told you to pick it up and walk?”¹³ The man who was healed had no idea who it was, for Jesus had slipped away into the crowd that was there.¹⁴ Later Jesus found him at the temple and said to him, “See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you.”¹⁵ The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well.¹⁶ So, because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jews persecuted him.¹⁷ Jesus said to them, “My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working.”¹⁸ For this reason the Jews tried all the harder to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.¹⁹ Jesus gave them this answer: “I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does.”²⁰ For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does. Yes, to your amazement he will show him even greater things than these.²¹ For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it.²² Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son,²³ that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him.²⁴ “I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.”²⁵ I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live.²⁶ For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself.²⁷ And he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man.²⁸ “Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice²⁹ and come out—those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise

to be condemned. ³⁰ By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me.”

Quite clearly there are three parts to this text:

- First, in verses 1-15, is the account of Jesus healing the paralyzed man.
- Secondly, in verses 16-18, we see a transition from the healing story to the confrontation of Jesus by the Jewish religious leaders.
- Thirdly, in verses 19-30, we see Jesus’ response.

It would be tempting to preach two sermons from this long text.

But I **don’t** think there is one lesson to be learned from the story of the healing and another from Jesus’ response.

- I don’t think this is a lesson on Jesus’ power to heal.
- It is not a lesson on the relationship of sin and sickness that comes up in verse 15. (there is some further help on this in the end notes)
- It is not a lesson on faith, or lack of faith, in Jesus.

I suggest, instead, that the point of the story and Jesus’ response **is to allow us to hear Jesus making audacious and fundamental claims about who he truly is.**

To support that, notice how the author connects the story to Jesus’ response:

John 5:16 “So, because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jews persecuted him. Jesus said to them...”

The Jewish leaders had a “beef” with the healed man because he was carrying his sleeping mat on the Sabbath, breaking one of their man-made laws.

When they learned that it was Jesus who told the healed man to do so, they came after Jesus.

Instead of being amazed and even grateful for the miraculous healing of one of their own people, these guys wanted to go to war over petty details.

What they wanted was to indict Jesus for breaking a Sabbath rule, but Jesus gave them far bigger issues to be concerned about.

John 5:17-18 “Jesus said to them, “My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working.”¹⁸ For this reason the Jews tried all the harder to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.

Here we come to the crux of the matter: They said Jesus was making himself equal with God.

First of all, how did they draw that conclusion?

The initial complaint they had was that Jesus was encouraging a man to “work” on the Sabbath by carrying his mat.

Those religious leaders knew that while people were not supposed to work on the Sabbath, God had to be exempt from that rule.

After all God was responsible for sustaining the universe.

So in their thinking God could “work” on Sabbath but no one else.

And therefore when Jesus identified himself not with those can’t work on the Sabbath but with God who can, he was saying he has the prerogatives of God.

Not only that, he didn’t say “our” Father; he said, “My Father.”

Their conclusion was that Jesus had just committed blasphemy – they understood him to be making himself equal with God.

Is that what Jesus meant to do?

Yes, but not in the way they thought he did.

Imagine what they thought when they assumed Jesus was “making himself equal with God.”

They knew their Bible:

- Deuteronomy 6:4 “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.

- Exodus 20:3 “You shall have no other gods before me.
- Isaiah 40:18,25 “To whom, then, will you compare God... Or who is my equal?” says the Holy One.”

And yet here before them was this man who said, in essence, he was God.

Most of us have some idea of the Trinity, the concept of one God in three persons.

Imagine, however, if you had never heard such a concept but instead were steeped in monotheism, assuming one being equals one person.

From the Jewish leaders’ perspective Jesus could only be claiming one of two things:

Was Jesus claiming to be ***the*** one and only God of the universe?
Is he agreeing there is only one God and he is it?

Or is he saying that he is another God in addition to the God of heaven?

Is he saying there are two gods, the Father in heaven and him?

The Jews think that the second option was impossible (“The Lord is One”).

And they considered the first option to be preposterous.
A man can’t be God.

So what ***is*** Jesus claiming?

I think I said earlier that even Christians often tend to fall into either one ditch of error or the other on either side of the truth.

Either we think of Jesus as if he were another God thus denying the Scripture’s clear teaching that God is one,

OR we think of Jesus as a lesser God, as I said, a kind of a junior God, or worse yet, just a great prophet, thus denying the Scripture’s clear teaching that he is fully God.

In his statement, Jesus is going to carefully avoid those errors and teach us who he truly is.

So instead of simply saying, “I am God,” which would have at least been confusing, Jesus comes at the issue differently.

If you were Jesus, how would you explain your relationship with God without falling into the error of claiming to be another God or the error of being a lesser God or only a human prophet?

John 5:19-20 “Jesus gave them this answer: “I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does.²⁰ For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does. Yes, to your amazement he will show him even greater things than these.

First, Jesus specifically says he is ***not*** acting independently of the Father. He refutes the idea of two gods operating independently when he says, “The Son can do ***nothing*** by himself.”

He specifically speaks of his dependence on the Father (“He can do only what he sees the Father doing.”)

And at the same time he speaks of the complete harmony of the Father and the Son, “because ***whatever*** the Father does the Son also does” and “the Father loves the Son and shows him ***all*** he does.”

In verse 30 Jesus says, “By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me.”

The point is not that he is somehow less than God but that his actions are perfectly consistent with the Father.

When the Bible teaches that “God cannot lie,” it is not speaking of a deficiency in God but instead it is speaking of his character.

Likewise here, when Jesus says that “by himself he can do nothing,” he is not speaking of a deficiency in himself,

but he is speaking of his oneness with the Father in that by nature he and the Father must act consistently.

They think and they act as one.

What Jesus is explaining is the relationship of two persons (Father and Son) who act in complete harmony.

The Father reveals ***everything*** of himself to the Son.

The Son does ***everything*** the Father does.

They are so identified with each other that the only way to explain it is that they are two persons but one being.

We will sometimes see a mother and daughter together and see how similarly they act and even speak.

We will sometimes say they even think alike. In fact sometimes so much that we say it is “spooky” how similar they are.

With Jesus it is not spooky, and it is not similar – it is PERFECT unity and it is downright supernatural.

Jesus ***alone*** is not God (there is also the Father) and neither is Jesus another God.

They are two persons (Father and Son) but one being.

So, was Jesus making himself equal with God?

Yes, but not in the way the Jews thought of it.

I said earlier that one of the errors we tend toward is making Jesus a lesser God, a junior God.

One of the reasons for that, I think, is because of the language Jesus uses to describe himself, even in this text.

All through this text he speaks of himself as the Son in relationship with his Father.

To us that Father/Son language might suggest a greater and a lesser.

Then we add to that, the fact that Jesus describes his relationship to the Father as one who does “only what he sees his Father doing,” and who is “entrusted” with judgment.

It is understandable that we might get the idea that Jesus is somehow less than the Father God.

This is where we must be very careful to see what the Bible teaches.

It is true that the Bible teaches that Jesus, God the Son, is subordinate to God the Father.

Not only in the text before us, but later in John we will hear Jesus say in John 14:28 “...I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I.”

And yet in words that seem to contradict that we also read where Jesus is declared to be fully God, not a lesser God:

John 1:1 “The Word (Jesus) was **God**”

John 1:18 “...God **the One and Only** (Jesus), who is at the Father’s side, has made him known.

John 20:28 “Thomas said to (Jesus), “My Lord and my **God!**”

How can Jesus be both subordinate and equal?

Theologians speak of it as ontological equality with functional hierarchy.

Ontological has to do with “being” and functional has to do with roles or activities.

Jesus speaks of both when he says in John 10:29-30 “**My Father**, who has given them to me, **is greater than all**; no one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand. ³⁰ **I and the Father are one.**”

We understand functional hierarchy –

In the functions and roles of life, we are usually in a hierarchy; there are those who are the bosses and those who are the subordinates. –

We are children to our parents, citizens to our government, and employees to our bosses.

But just because we are subordinate in our function doesn't mean for a minute that we are inferior in our person or unequal in being or a lesser being.

We know ourselves to be equal with any other human being – we have the same creator, the same worth in the eyes of God and an equally eternal soul.

As to our being human we are completely the equal with any other human.

Again it is “ontological equality” (equal to any boss in being) and yet functionally subordinate.

Now regarding Jesus we see the same idea.

In Philippians 2:6-7 we read, “Who, being in very nature God (equal in nature, in being), did not consider equality with God something to be grasped (clinging to), ⁷ but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness (functionally subordinate).” (See a footnote regarding Jesus' eternal status as Son to the Father.)

One God, meaning one Divine Being, in **two** persons (in fact one Being in three persons, when we learn about the Holy Spirit).

And once again, the difference in their persons is not in their essential nature or character (their equality) but in the way they relate to each other and to God's work of creation and salvation in the world.

For the first four hundred years the church wrestled with how to convey that truth.

Finally in the Athanasian Creed they captured this difficult concept.

Athanasian Creed:

- We worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity;
- Neither confounding the persons, nor dividing the substance (being);

- For there is one Person of the Father, another of the Son and another of the Holy Spirit.
- But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit is all one, the glory equal, the majesty co-eternal. So the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God;
- And yet they are not three Gods, but one God.
- And in this Trinity none is afore, nor after another; none is greater, or less than another.
- But the whole three persons are co-eternal, and co-equal.

But in our text, Jesus goes on to explain his relationship to the Father: John 5:20 “For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does. Yes, to your amazement he will show him even greater things than these. ²¹ For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it. ²² Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, ²³ that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him.”

So intimate is the relationship that there is **nothing** about the Father that is not disclosed to the Son.

And we saw in verse 9, the Son reveals the Father by doing **all** the Father does.

All humans have a very limited knowledge of God; here Jesus is said to have complete knowledge.

This can only be possible if he too is God and yet not a separate God.

But even more startling to those Jewish listeners is what we hear next:

Who is the only one who is the ultimate source of life? God

Who is the only one who has the authority of final judgment? God

Who is the only one to receive the highest honor? God

But here Jesus claims to be that ultimate life source.

John 5:21 “For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it.

John 5:26 “For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself.

All life on earth owes its existence to a life-source, whether it is an acorn or an egg.

All life is borrowed except for God’s life which is his very essence.

The Scripture teaches us that God is that life-source.

God is, from all eternity past, a self-existent life.

Exodus 8:14 God said, “I am.”

But listen to Jesus in John 8:28 “I tell you the truth,” Jesus answered, “before Abraham was born, I am!”

Here Jesus claims he is that life from eternity past.

He is life and he is the source of life.

Not only is Jesus the source of life, but here we see that Jesus also claims to be the ultimate judge.

John 5:22 “Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son

John 5:27 “And he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man.

And Jesus said he will judge justly between those who will live and those who will be condemned.

The Apostle Paul spoke of it as that day when Jesus comes again and he punishes those who have not believed and is marveled at by those who have.

Jesus is claiming divine right.

Then maybe the ultimate blasphemy, in the ears of those Jewish religious leaders, were these words from Jesus:

John 5:23 “That all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him.”

Ringling in their ears would be the words of holy Scripture:

Exodus 20:3,5 “You shall have no other gods before me....⁵

You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, (am) the LORD your God...”

But here Jesus says not only must you honor me, but if you don't honor me, you don't honor the Father who sent me.

Elsewhere in the Bible we hear, “That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father

Could any claim to being God be clearer?

So who does Jesus claim to be?

It is a well-known quote, but worth repeating: C.S. Lewis writes, “I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: "I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept His claim to be God." That is the one thing we must not say. A man who said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic--on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg--or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.” (C.S.

Lewis, Mere Christianity, 52)

That Jesus, who is God the Son, then says in John 5:24 “I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.”

Notice again the one mind, the one intention, and the one promise of the Father and the Son.

To hear Jesus is to believe him; to believe him is to believe the Father.

You can't have the Father without the Son.

And to have Jesus is to have life, eternal life.

Believing in him, trusting in him, means we have crossed over from death to life.

Jesus is the object of our faith.

What an audacious claim! It is our relationship with that God/man Jesus; it is our response to him that makes the difference between life and death.

- With your mind's eye can you see Jesus in a manger?
- Can you see him being baptized by John the Baptist?
- Can you see him talking to the woman at the well?

That is the person we are asked to trust.

- How about when he drives the money-changers off the Temple grounds?
- Can you see him healing the man born blind?
- See him standing in front of Lazarus' tomb calling the man to come forth from the dead.

Do you see **that** man, that God/man?

We are asked to place our very lives in **his** hands?

- Can you see him with his disciples at that last Passover meal when he tells them he is about to die?
- Do you see him hanging on that cross saying, “Father, forgive them?”

- Can you see him standing on the Mount of Olives east of Jerusalem and there before your very eyes he ascends into heaven?
Do you see him? **He** is God and it is him we are to trust with our lives and eternity.
- Do you see him seated at the right hand of the Father in heaven?
Can you see him? Do you trust HIM?

It's not just a concept we believe; it is not just a creed we repeat; it is a person we trust, the person of Jesus, God the Son.

And when we pray, we do not pray to some idea or some ideal; we do not pray into a great void out there hoping we are heard; we pray to a person, the person of God – the God who is there and who has been here, revealing himself to us and is coming again.

Let me end with a powerful quotation:

“You see how it all ties together. If Jesus is God, -- not god, (with a) small ‘g’, not god as the term is often used today, not god as we would speak blasphemy ourselves nowadays about ourselves being gods and so on, but (God as) the living, eternal, holy, God who made the heavens and the earth, who gives life to every creature, who judges the living and the dead, – *THAT GOD* – if Jesus is that God, then surely his death on the cross is, and must be, the salvation of all who trust in him. And if Jesus is Almighty God, the Son of the Father, who came into the world to do his Father’s holy will, then surely it is the only conceivable wisdom, goodness, good sense, the only conceivable right, for all men and women to love him and obey him, and serve him, especially when he promises eternal life to everyone who believes in him and receives his word.”

From Robert Rayburn sermon on John 5 1-30, May 14, 2000 Monergism sermon website

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The Connections between the story (v1-15) and the discourse (16-30)

Later Jesus will say that he does the same work his father does.

5:17 “My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working.”

And in the story we see him doing it – he came to heal, to restore.

5:8-9 “Then Jesus said to him, “Get up! Pick up your mat and walk.”⁹
At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked.”

Later Jesus will say he has the power to give life.

5:21 “The Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it.

And in the story we see him doing that very thing.

5:8-9 “Then Jesus said to him, “Get up! Pick up your mat and walk.”⁹
At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked.”

Later Jesus will say he has the right to choose whom he will give life to.

5:21 “The Son gives life **to whom he is pleased to give it.**

And in the story he does it.

Out of the many who were there, the text says in 5:6 “When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, “Do you want to get well?”

Later, Jesus will say that he has the authority to judge.

5:22 “Moreover, the Father...has entrusted all judgment to the Son...”

And in the story we see him passing that judgment.

5:14 “Later Jesus found (the healed man) at the temple and said to him, “See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you.”

We are Trinitarian:

Not modalism – One God (being and person) presented in three forms – as Father in heaven, and then as the Son when God came to earth and then as the Holy Spirit when he acts in the hearts of people.

Not Arianism – Jesus was created by God before the world began and while he has divine qualities, he is not God. Jehovah's Witnesses are modern day Arians.

Not Subordinationism - Jesus has always existed but he is not equal to the Father in being or attributes.

Not Adoptionism - at Jesus' baptism, God adopted Jesus as his Son and conferred on him supernatural power although he is not divine.

Not Tri-theists (polytheism) which hold that each of the Father, Son and Spirit are separate gods.

Sin and Sickness – a commentary especially on John 5:14

From D.A. Carson, *John*, pages 245-246

JOHN 5:1—15

11—13. The man defends himself by blaming the one who told him to do it. It is a doubtful exegesis that understands the man to be defending Jesus, as if he were saying that anyone with the authority to heal certainly has the authority to interpret the law authoritatively. He is simply ‘ducking’ the authorities; he will shortly go so far as to try to ingratiate himself with them (v. 15). For their part, the authorities perceive that anyone going around *telling* people to contravene one of the thirty-nine prohibited categories of work is far more dangerous than the odd individual who does so. They therefore inquire who the healer was (v. 12), but the healed man has no idea. There may also be a hint of irony (much more strongly developed in the healing of Jn. 9): the Jews hear of the wonderful healing and of the formal breath of their code, and are interested only in the latter. They think they see what is important, but in religious matters there are none so blind as those who are always certain that they see (*cf.* 9:39—41). Jesus himself had quickly slipped away (v. 13), acting in accordance with what became a consistent policy (*cf.* notes on 6:15).

14. *Later* (we do not know how much: on *meta tauta*, *cf.* notes on 2:12), Jesus finds the cured man at *the temple* (*i.e.* somewhere in the temple precincts, just south of the Bethesda pools) and explicitly connects the healing (*See, you are well again*) with the urgent need for moral reformation (*Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you*). Various scholars have insisted John is not implying that the man’s illness was a consequence of a particular sin or pattern of sin. The most common reasons are: (1) ‘Stop sinning’ doubtless implies that the man was not chosen for healing because of his moral perfection, but it does not imply more. (2) Elsewhere in the Fourth Gospel, illness and death seem to be tied to the glory of God (9:3; 11:4); indeed, in the former of these two passages, any connection with a specific, individual sin is denied. (3) The clause ‘something worse may happen to you’ should be understood in line with Luke 13:1—5 – the Galileans who suffered so badly at Pilate’s hands, and those on whom the tower of Siloam fell, were not pre-eminently guilty, and in the same way the thirty-eight years of paralysing illness cannot serve as an index of this man’s guilt.

These arguments do not hold up to close scrutiny. (1) The issue is not whether this man was a *pre-eminent* sinner, but whether some tragedies in Scripture (and this one in particular) are seen as the outcome of specific sin. The answer is surely affirmative (*e.g.* Acts 5:1—11; 1 Cor. 11:30; 1 Jn. 5:16). This does not mean that everyone who commits these sins will inevitably fall ill or die; it does mean that some instances of suffering are the direct results of specific sin. (2) Syntactically, the two clauses, ‘Stop sinning’ and ‘something worse may happen to you’, cannot be interpreted independently. They are tied together: the meaning is ‘Stop sinning *lest* something worse happen to you’. The unavoidable implication is that the bad thing that has already happened was occasioned by the sin which the person must not repeat. (3) Luke 13:1—5 has its own message for those who look on the tragedy of others: they must not interpret such tragedy as signifying that those who have suffered are morally inferior. We are all guilty; unless we repent, we too will perish. Meanwhile, it is of the Lord’s mercies that we are not consumed. But Luke 13:1—5 says nothing *to the person who is suffering*, and is therefore irrelevant here. (4) It is a commonplace in many strands of Jewish and Christian theology that suffering and tragedy are the effluent of the fall, the corollary of life lived in a fallen and rebellious universe. In that sense, all sickness is the result of sin, but not necessarily of some specific, individual sin. In Matthew, Jesus’ healing ministry functions in part as a sign that the deadly effects of the fall are being rolled back (Mt. 8:16—17; *cf.* Carson, *Matt*, pp. 204—207) by the one who came to save his people from their sin (Mt. 1:21). But although suffering and illness have this deep, theological connection with sin in general, and although John elsewhere insists that a specific ailment is not *necessarily* the result of a specific sin (9:3), there is

nothing in any of this that precludes the possibility that *some* ailments are the *direct* consequences of *specific* sins. And that is the most natural reading of this verse. (5) If so, it is just possible John is also telling us that the reason Jesus chose *this* invalid out of all the others who were waiting for the waters to be stirred, was precisely because his illness, and his alone, was tied to a specific sin.

If this interpretation is right, the syntax of *Stop sinning* is chosen to stress urgency.' The *something worse* must be final judgment (*cf* v. 29).

15. Guilty of dullness rather than treachery, the man goes away and tells *the Jews* (*cf* notes on v. 10) *that it was Jesus who had made him well*. It will not do to suppose he is innocently giving credit where credit is due, like the healed man in 9:11. In the latter case, credit is given when it is still a question of establishing the reality and credibility of the miracle; in the present context, the motive can hardly be a desire to assign appropriate praise to Jesus, for the hostile opposition has already manifested itself (vv. 11—13).

Was Jesus' subordinate rank only while he was on earth or was it from eternity past and will it be into eternity future?

From all eternity, the Father has been the Father, the Son the Son, and the Holy Spirit the Holy Spirit.

- Ephesians 1:3-4 The Father chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world.
- Romans 8:29 "For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son..." In eternity past Jesus is referred to as "his Son."
- Galatians 4:4 "But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son..." Clearly before Jesus came to earth he is referred to as God's Son.
- 1 Corinthians 15:24 "Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power.

John 5:26 "For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself.

AND the Father granted life-giving authority to the Son in eternity past or said another way, it has for all eternity past been a prerogative of the Son.

"For it seems clear that what is being said is that in some way, altogether mysterious to us, the Son derives his self-existence from the Father. Theologians have through the ages referred to this as the doctrine of "the eternal generation of the Son." We confessed it in the phrase, "very God of very God", all speaking of Jesus Christ, "begotten not made, being of one substance with the Father". No one really knows what that means. We are confessing our faith; we're not explaining this, it is beyond us, a subject far beyond us, ineffable. But it seems clear that we are being told that Jesus is eternal life, he has self-existence in himself, and yet, in some way, he has derived that self-existence from the Father." Robert Rayburn, May 14, 2000

A.W. Pink's "Seven-fold affirmation of the Deity of Christ."

1. In Service, verses 16-18.
2. In Will, verse 19.
3. In Intelligence, verse 20.
4. In Sovereign Rights, verse 21.
5. In Divine Honors, verses 22-23.
6. In Imparting Life, verses 24-26.
7. In Judicial Power and Authority, verses 27-30. A.W. Pink *Exposition of the Gospel of John*, 254

Did Jesus break the Law of God? John 5:9

The law of God prohibited doing one's usual work on Sabbath but did not prohibit carrying a mat for lying on. But the "tradition of the elders" developed 39 categories of "work" that were prohibited and this man was breaking one of those laws. (Carson, 244)

"The Law of the sabbatical rest was perhaps the most important of all the bulwarks by which Judaism was protected from erosion by the encompassing paganism." (L. Newbigin in Milne, *The Message of John*, 95)

"In practice the letter of the law had come to dominate its spirit. Outward conformity replaced heart commitment. They lost sight of the ultimate purpose of the law (which was to) model a life which pleased God and witnessed to his gracious choice of Israel. (Instead) the law became an end in itself." (Milne, 95)

Commentary on 5:29 "those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned."

"This does not mean that salvation is on the basis of good works, for this very Gospel makes it plain over and over again that men enter eternal life

when they believe on Jesus Christ. But the lives they live form the test of the faith they profess.” (Morris, John, 322)

“Those who have done good.” Cf John 3:21 “But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God.”

“Those who have done evil will rise to be condemned.” Cf John 3:20
“Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.