

**The Word Became Flesh**  
**(Week 13)**  
**John 5:17-23**  
**“God With Us”**

**Introduction**

**Therefore, The LORD Himself will give you a sign: See, the virgin will conceive, and have a Son, and name Him Immanuel.** **Isaiah 7:14**

Long before the birth of Christ, God had spoken of Him by the prophets. The message was clear. Someone was coming to this world, the likes of which no one had seen before. Moses foretold of the Great Prophet that was to come (**Deuteronomy 18:5**). Zechariah spoke of the One Who would be “The Branch” (**Zechariah 3:8**), an offshoot from King David’s roots. Daniel spoke of the Anointed One, Who would come to die (**Daniel 9:26**). But it is Isaiah who explains that this Messiah Prophet would also be God incarnate, Immanuel meaning literally “God with us”. John carries this theme for us through his entire gospel, so that there can be no room for doubt that Jesus is in fact God.

**In the beginning was The Word, and The Word was with God, and The Word was God.** **John 1:1**

And then he says:

**The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.** **John 1:14**

So, make no mistake, those who refuse to place their faith in Jesus are simply without excuse. The Word of God could not possibly make it any clearer. Jesus is Immanuel, God WITH us. Many have argued that Jesus Himself “never made this claim”. But John would beg to differ. Jesus makes it very clear in **John Chapter Five** that He is God in the flesh. And that is exactly why the Jewish religious leaders wanted to murder Him. It was because of His claim of equality with God.

The narrative of **Chapter Five** begins innocently enough, with Jesus healing a lame beggar at the pool of Bethesda. But God had actually preplanned this healing miracle to set in motion a chain of events that would ultimately end at the cross of Calvary. Jesus healed a man, in order to start up a conflict with the Pharisees! All of this was the will of the Father. None of these things occurred by happenstance. For in order for Jesus to be rejected by His own and crucified for the sins of the world, a fight had to be started. And it was started by the miraculous healing of a helpless soul on the Sabbath day. Can you imagine how unloving these self-righteous leaders truly were that they could witness a miracle of loving kindness and instead of rejoicing in it, would use it as an excuse to commit murder? How desperately wicked is the heart of man!

By enabling a cripple to get up and walk, Jesus exposed the vileness of those who claimed to be the most “spiritual”. And they hated Him for it. And this was God’s sovereign plan all along. When the man who was healed turned Jesus in to the Pharisees, they confronted Him in the Temple. They got a lot more than they bargained for. What started out as a simple rebuke for “working on the Sabbath”, turned into a message from God that infuriated the religious zealots of Jerusalem. And from that day forward they would continually plot to have The Son of God executed. In fact, they were absolutely obsessed with the notion. And they would not rest until they witnessed His death for themselves. And why were they so offended by this carpenter from Nazareth? Because He claimed to be equal with God! He even lists for them several things that proved this equality. In **verses 17-23**, we see that Jesus is equal with God in *Activity*, in *Awareness*, and in *Authority*.

### **Equal Activity (vs. 17-19)**

**Jesus responded to them, "My Father is still working, and I am working also." This is why the Jews began trying all the more to kill Him: Not only was He breaking the Sabbath, but He was even calling God His own Father, making Himself equal to God. Jesus replied, "Truly I tell you, The Son is not able to do anything on His own, but only what He sees The Father doing. For whatever The Father does, The Son likewise does these things."** **John 5:17-19**

When God created the entire universe in which we live, He did it in six days. And on the seventh day, He rested from His labor, for everything that He created was good. Both to glorify Himself and also for the benefit of man, God created a Sabbath rest for His creation. He intended it to be a day in which man not only rested, but also reflected upon his Creator. The Sabbath was given to man as a gift from God, not as a burden. But religious legalism had turned the Sabbath day into something to be endured rather than enjoyed. It was never the intention of God to give His creation a rest day that was actually more stressful than the six workdays that preceded it! But that is exactly what the religious leaders of Israel had done. Any infraction of their onerous Sabbath day rules was considered to be a crime against the state.

While in fact God did rest from His labor after the sixth day of creation, the devil immediately went to work to spoil that rest. Sin entered into the world, and the curse fell upon mankind. Since that day, God has been laboring continuously in order to rescue fallen mankind. The lame man at the pool of Bethesda was a physical example of the spiritual condition of fallen man. They are paralyzed by sin and unable to help themselves. Therefore, God is always working to bring them healing. When Jesus cured this lame man of his infirmity, He, in essence, gave him back his life. Jesus came into this world so that, in Him, we might have life. Remember how John begins this gospel message?

**In Him was life, and that life was the light of men.**

**John 1:4**

When Jesus was confronted by the Pharisees for breaking the Sabbath, He explained to them that because of the sinful condition of this world, God was continually at work, and therefore, He also must be working. The Pharisees knew exactly what He meant by this claim. He was claiming to be equal with God. Because His Father was working, He too was working. Thanks to the curse of sin, God never gets an off day. Think about it this way: if a person prays on the Sabbath, does God not answer? Of course He does. We are in constant need of His guidance. God never gets a day off! He is on call, as it were, 24/7. And we should be thankful for this!

Jesus is God. And as God, He too is unable to take a Sabbath rest. There is too much at stake for Him. He explained to the Pharisees, that He would be working as long as His Father was working. He had no choice, for He and the Father are equal in their activity! And what's more, The Son never does anything independently of The Father. When we study Matthew's gospel, we see this fleshed out perfectly in the temptation of Jesus (**Matthew 4**). Satan did everything in his power to coerce The Son of God to act independently of His Father. But Jesus refused. He would not even perform a miracle for Himself in order to satisfy His own physical hunger. Instead, He chose to act in perfect harmony with the will of His Father saying:

**"...Man must not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God."**

**Matthew 4:4b**

The Father and The Son are one in their activity, because The Father, The Spirit, and The Son are ONE God!

### **Equal Awareness (vs. 20)**

**"For The Father loves The Son and shows Him everything He is doing, and He will show Him greater works than these so that you will be amazed."**

**John 5:20**

In this one sentence, Jesus explains that He and The Father have the same mind! He sees exactly what The Father sees, and therefore, He does exactly as The Father does. Jesus was the very mind of God in a human body. Nothing was hidden from Him. He is the Omniscient God. And as such, the miracle of healing that took place at Bethesda was just the tip of the iceberg. God was planning to do great wonders in this world. The greatest of these wonders is the regeneration of the multitude of lost souls who would find life in Christ Jesus. Just as Christ gave back the crippled man his life when he raised him up to his feet, those who were dead in their trespasses and sins would be raised to newness of life in Him. Jesus told the Pharisees that day that He and His Father were just getting started! The looks upon their faces must have been priceless.

There is a lesson here for us as well. As followers of Jesus, we know that God is always at work around us. And while we, as yet, are not perfectly in sync with The Father, we do have His Spirit living within us. Therefore, we need to constantly be on the lookout all around us for God doing His work. For example, *The Bible* clearly tells us that no one comes to Jesus unless The Father draws him (**John 6:44**). We know this to be true, because Jesus said it was so. So when we see someone who is showing interest in knowing more about Jesus, we can rest assured that this is God at work.

When we see such spiritual activity, we must drop everything and join in with this work of God. When God shows us that He is working around us, then nothing else matters in that instant. So the next time someone asks a question regarding spiritual matters, know that this is God at work. And do not let this opportunity slip away. Join in with God when you see this kind of spiritual activity. Jesus had equal awareness of His Father's activity. We also have The Spirit of The Living God within us if we are in Christ. So we must also be about our Heavenly Father's business. Jesus has the mind of God, because He is God. If we are in Christ, we have access to this mind as well. And this access enables us to not only see God at work, but it also allows us to discern spiritual things.

**Now we have not received the spirit of the world, but the Spirit Who comes from God, so that we may understand what has been freely given to us by God. We also speak these things, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by The Spirit, explaining spiritual things to spiritual people. But the person without The Spirit does not receive what comes from God's Spirit, because it is foolishness to him; he is not able to understand it since it is evaluated spiritually. The spiritual person, however, can evaluate everything, and yet he himself cannot be evaluated by anyone. For who has known the LORD'S mind, that he may instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ.** **1 Corinthians 2:12-16**

### **Equal Authority (vs. 21-23)**

**And just as The Father raises the dead and gives them life, so The Son also gives life to whom He wants. The Father, in fact, judges no one but has given all judgement to The Son, so that all people may honor The Son just as they honor The Father. Anyone who does not honor The Son does not honor The Father Who sent Him.** **John 5:21-23**

In case that the Pharisees had somehow misunderstood Jesus' claims of deity, these verses make it unmistakable. Jesus has the power over life and death, just as His Father does. As John so eloquently put it in the introduction of his gospel, **"In Him was life, and that life was the light of men."** The Son is equal with God in every way, including over life itself. He is the Creator and sustainer of life.

Of course, the "life" that He is speaking of in this text is not just physical life, but spiritual life as well. To know Christ is to be reborn from above and have everlasting life. Knowing Christ is the key to experiencing real life. Not just existing in the flesh, but rather, living with an eternal purpose. As the Apostle Paul would say:

**For in Him we live and move and have our being...**

**Acts 17:28a**

Not only does Christ have the power over life and death. He also has been granted all authority to judge mankind. God will determine whether we are given life or death depending upon what decision we make about Christ. Whether we believe in Him and have everlasting life (**John 3:16**), or whether we reject Him and remain in God's wrath.

**Anyone who believes in Him is not condemned, but anyone who does not believe is already condemned, because he has not believed in the name of the one and only Son of God.** **John 3:18**

Make no mistake to the claims of Christ in these passages, He has equal authority with God. Authority over life and death and over judgment. The Son is to be worshiped and given honor, just as is The Father. So, if anyone ever tells you that Jesus never claimed to be God, you show them the **Fifth Chapter of John!** The Pharisees plainly understood His claims, and that is why they despised Him. You have been given the choice as to whether you will believe or disbelieve the testimony of Jesus. But you cannot say that Jesus never claimed to be God, for He most certainly did! He claimed to be equal in every way: equal in *Activity*, in *Awareness*, and in all *Authority*.

Jesus Christ is the Immanuel that the prophets foretold. He is God with us. And to honor Him is to honor The Father. And to reject Him is to dishonor The Father. The religious leaders of Israel were given a choice that day, and they chose wrong. People reject Christ on a daily basis. There is nothing new about this. But those who recognize Him will be given life everlasting the hour they first believe. Do you believe in Him today? Have you turned from your sins and confessed with your mouth that Jesus is LORD? He has promised to those who believe in Him that they will inherit everlasting life.

So how can I know if I truly have this great salvation? The man at the pool of Bethesda was healed, but his actions proved that he had not been made whole. So how can we know for sure, if we have been changed. I will give you five "proofs" today so that you can be assured of security in Christ. So that you can know that you are made "whole".

- W. Want.** Do you have a desire to have Christ as LORD?  
He told us that no one comes to Him unless the Father draws them.  
So if you truly want Jesus, then this is proof of The Spirit's call upon your life.
- H. Humility.** Have you been humbled by a true encounter with the risen Christ?  
He says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."  
In order to be saved, you must first realize that you NEED saving!  
And after we are forgiven, we still remain humbled in the presence of the Savior  
Who gives us this undeserved gift of grace.
- O. Obedience.** To be born again is to long to follow Christ.  
If you do not long to obey Him, then you do not know Him.
- L. Love.** To know Christ is to love Christ, and to Love His Word, as well as, His people.  
Those who have been truly reborn from above will love these things.
- E. Endure.** Those who have truly been born from above will also have an enduring faith.  
When trials and testing come, they will only serve to strengthen the faith of a true believer. Those who turn away from Jesus when the hard times come, never had Jesus to begin with.

So there you have it. These are the distinguishing marks of genuine salvation. Jesus has the power to give life. Don't be like the lame beggar at the well of Bethesda, who received a physical healing but missed out on eternal life in Jesus. Come to Jesus and be made whole. He has the authority to grant to you life everlasting. Honor The Father by praising The Son.

And let the healed and whole say... **TRUTH!!!**