

## **The Gospel of John**

### **Session Ten: Jesus's Discourse on His Authority**

#### **Commentary**

#### **John 5:19-47**

5:19–26 On Jesus's relationship to the Father in these verses, see 3:16–18.

5:19 Jesus's claim that the Son is not able to do anything on his own echoes Moses's affirmation "that ... the Lord sent me to do all these things and that it was not of my own will" (Nm 16:28).

5:21 Jesus's statement that the Son also gives life to whom he wants is significant since raising the dead and giving life are the prerogatives of God alone (Dt 32:39; 1Sm 2:6; 2Kg 5:7).

5:22 Like life (v. 21), judgment is the exclusive prerogative of God (Gn 18:25; Jdg 11:27), and the Father has given all judgment to the Son.

5:23 Jesus characterized himself as God's authorized messenger. This is similar to Moses and the prophets, who served as God's agents and spokesmen. Of designated messengers (Hb shaliach), Jews held that "a man's agent is like the man himself" (m. Ber. 5:5). The statement so that all people may honor the Son just as they honor the Father in effect established Jesus's right to be worshiped and amounted to a claim of deity.

5:25 Jesus's words are reminiscent of Ezekiel's vision of the valley of dry bones (Ezk 37).

5:26 The claim that Jesus had life in himself echoes the affirmation in the prologue of John's Gospel that "in him [Jesus] was life" (1:4; see 14:4–6). It is further supported by Jesus's statement, "I am the resurrection and the life" (11:25). Because he is "the life" and has life in himself, Jesus is able to give life (abundant life now; eternal life in the future) to all who place their trust in him (3:16; 10:10).

5:27 Because he is the Son of Man echoes Dn 7:13.

5:28–29 Compare these verses with Dn 12:2.

5:30 On I can do nothing on my own, see vv. 19, 23.

5:31–47 Jesus spoke of several witnesses who bore testimony about him: John the Baptist (vv. 32–36; cp. 1:7–8, 15, 19, 32–34; 3:26); his own works (5:36; cp. 10:25, 32, 37–38; 15:24); God the Father (5:37–38; 8:18); and the Scriptures (5:39), particularly those written by Moses (vv. 45–47). Elsewhere in this Gospel, reference is made to the witness of Jesus himself (3:11, 32; 8:14, 18; 18:37), the Spirit (chaps. 14–16, esp. 15:26), the disciples (15:27), and the Fourth Evangelist (19:35; 21:24). The "witness" theme in John's Gospel is part of a larger "trial motif."

This reverses the world's perspective of Jesus being put on trial. It becomes clear that it is really the world, not Jesus, that is on trial, with a multitude of witnesses bearing testimony to his true identity as Messiah. This section also emphasizes the world's guilt for rejecting Jesus.

5:31 Jesus did not deny his reliability. He was alluding to the importance of having multiple witnesses (Dt 17:6; 19:15; cp. Nm 35:30).

5:32 Jesus was speaking of God the Father (v. 37) when he said, There is another who testifies about me. Avoiding God's name was a common way of showing reverence.

5:33 On Jesus as the truth, see 14:4–6 and the echo of this passage before Pilate (18:37). Compare 3Jn 3, 12.

5:35 Jesus's characterization of John the Baptist as a burning and shining lamp seems to echo Ps 132:17 where God "prepared a lamp" for his Anointed One. John was a "lamp" but not the Light (Jn 1:7–9); his witness was comparatively small and temporary. The past tense may imply that John was now dead or imprisoned. See 3:29, 30.

5:37 The Father ... has himself testified may refer to the voice at Jesus's baptism (Mt 3:17), a passage not explicitly mentioned in John, though the primary reference may be to God's witness in Scripture (Jn 5:45–47; cp. Lk 24:27, 44; Ac 13:27; 1Jn 5:9). Jesus's affirmation that his hearers had not heard God's voice or seen his form (cp. 1:18) seems to allude to wilderness Israel, which received the law at Mount Sinai without hearing God's voice or seeing his form.

5:38 Have his word residing in you recalls the depiction of a God-fearing person who has the word of God living in his heart (Jos 1:8–9; Ps 119:11).

5:39 Scripture itself does not impart life, but it witnesses to the one who does—Jesus (cp. vv. 46–47).

5:43 Jesus predicted the proliferation of false christs as a sign of the end times (Mt 24:5). The first-century Jewish historian Josephus reported a string of messianic pretenders in the years before AD 70.

5:45–47 Jesus's appeal to Moses prepares the way for chap. 6, where Jesus is presented as the new Moses providing the new "bread from heaven." The reference to Moses as a witness or accuser against the Jews may allude to Dt 31:26–27 where the law was invoked as a witness against the Israelites. The reference to Moses writing about Jesus in Jn 5:46 may allude to the Pentateuch (attributed to Moses) or to the prediction of a "prophet like" Moses in Dt 18:15.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *CSB Study Bible*. Edited by Trevin Wax. (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017).