

The Authority of the Son

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 11 December 2016

Preacher: Shawn Woo

[0 : 00] Let's pray. Heavenly Father, you have spoken to us through your word here in John 5, 16, 47.

And we ask now that by your spirit, the breath of God, that you would carry forth your word and implant them deep into our hearts.

That you would address us, speak to us so that we might be changed, so that our lives may be reprioritized, so that we may live to please the only God.

Help us now in Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. When someone tries to speak authoritatively on a subject, it's right for us to expect some kind of credentials.

So if you're driving and someone pulls you over with a siren in their car, then you are right to demand that that person show you his police badge. And in the same way, if you were to go into MIT and try to teach math there, you better have a PhD in math.

[1 : 18] You've got to have some kind of credentials. And so it's right for us to ask for that kind of, to prove someone's authenticity, their authority to speak on a subject. And the Gospel of John contains some of the most amazing claims that Jesus makes throughout his ministry.

And one of them, which we spoke of last week, he says in verse 16, my father is working until now and I am working, saying that he essentially identified himself with God the Father as the Lord of creation who works even on the Sabbath.

And when you make these claims, they need to be, that you need to give evidence of why you can say that, why you have the authority to say what you say, and why you have the credentials to do that.

And that's essentially what Jesus tries to do in this passage. And what Jesus claims is even, is so ludicrous from the eyes of the Jewish leaders, because if you look at verse 17, he says, my father, right?

And just to illustrate that, if I'm in the same room as my sister and I'm talking about my dad, my father, I don't say my dad, right? Because it's our dad, right?

[2 : 29] And so I'd either simply just say dad or our dad. I would never say my dad when I'm talking to my sister about my father, right? But so the Jews were in a habit of, in their worship services of referring to God as our father, recognizing collectively that God is their father.

But here in their very presence, Jesus looks to them. He says, my father is working. So he's setting himself apart from them and telling them that, you know what?

God, you say is our father, but he's a father to me in a way that he is and to you, right? I have a unique relationship with him. And so he's claiming really, in essence, equality with him because he's saying he's God, he's his father.

They share the same nature. And so the Jews correctly catch the drift of Jesus's argument. And so they're indignant and they try to kill him. Verse 18, this was why 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.

If any claim to authority needs to be proved or demonstrated, this one does. And that's what Jesus sets out to do. And he does that by telling us to believe that he is the son of God who imparts eternal life because of his works, because of his father and his scriptures.

[3 : 53] They bear witness about him. So he's saying we need to believe in him as a son of God who imparts eternal life because three things, his works, his father and his scriptures bear witness about him.

And we're going to go through that. First, talk about the extent of the son's authority, the origin of the son's authority, and then finally, the evidence of the son's authority. So first, let's talk about the

extent of the son's authority.

Really, what kind of authority does a son have? And the Jewish leaders, while they were right to get that Jesus was claiming equality with God, they were also misunderstanding a part of that because when they accuse Jesus of claiming equality with God, they think that Jesus is saying that he is another God, a God really in competition with God the Father, like a God alongside him, a separate from him.

And that to them was unacceptable because they believed in one God. But that's not what Jesus is saying. And he makes this clear in verse 19. So Jesus said to them, truly, truly, I say to you, the son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the father doing.

And that's a categorical statement. So the son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the father doing. That's what he does. That's the extent of the son's authority.

[5 : 13] It's circumscribed by the father's will. Jesus is equal with God. Yes, that is true. But Jesus is not independent from God. They're one God.

In fact, there's such a unity that the son does nothing of his own accord. He only sees what the father is doing, only does what the father is doing. This is a doctrine that we call a functional subordination of the son.

It's taught that even though Jesus is fully equal, even though he's fully God, even though he has the same nature and essence in his function, in his works, Jesus willingly and eternally submits to the father.

And that's what's taught here. And later, John will also talk about the Holy Spirit, which forms the Trinity. So the extent of the son's authority is circumscribed by the father's will.

But of course, that doesn't mean that it's a limitation of any sort for Jesus, because the father is God. He's omnipotent. He's infinite.

[6 : 13] So really, when you say that Jesus can only do what he sees the father do, like that's not saying that Jesus is limited. Rather, it's saying that Jesus can do a whole lot. Jesus can do all that God does.

Jesus has the divine prerogatives to himself. And so verses 19 to 20 says this, For whatever the father does, that the son does likewise. Father loves the son and shows him all that he himself is doing.

And greater works than these will show him so that you may marvel. Now, Jesus had just raised up or healed an invalid of 38 years.

But now he promises you will see greater works than these that will make you marvel. And then he details what some of these great works might be. And the chief among them being, in verses 21 to 22, that he gets to impart eternal life to people and judge them at the final judgment.

That's one of the chief among the things that Jesus gets to do, because he does what the father does. In verses 21 to 22, read it with me. For as the father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the son gives life to whom he will.

[7 : 25] For the father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the son. And notice the connection between judgment and life, eternal life there. Because Jesus gets to impart eternal life.

For the father judges no one. And that's because the judgment is related. Later in verse 29, it says, Those who have done good to the resurrection of life will be raised, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.

So life and judgment are set up against each other. And that's why Jesus having the prerogative to give eternal life is the same prerogative to judge. Because by not giving eternal life to people, those people are subject to, liable to God's judgment.

And because the father has appointed Jesus to be the judge, he gets to impart eternal life. And what exactly is eternal life? We talked about eternal life a lot throughout the Gospel of John, but this passage gives us more details into what it actually is.

And two kinds of eternal life are mentioned. Here in verses 25 to 29. In verse 25, Jesus says, 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.

[8 : 36] And then second, Jesus says in verses 28 and 29, An hour is coming, when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out. Those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.

I don't know if you caught this, but if you examine those, compare those two sentences side by side, in the first case, Jesus says, An hour is coming and is now here.

So he says that it's coming and is also already here. But in the second case, Jesus merely says, An hour is coming. He does not say that it is now here. So that's two different types of eternal life, the kinds of eternal life that Jesus is talking about.

The first kind that Jesus imparts is spiritual life. The life of the soul that Jesus makes possible at his first coming, through his death and resurrection, by reconciling us, forgiving us of our sins, atoning for our sin, and delivering us from death, he imparts spiritual life to people who are spiritually dead. That's the first kind of eternal life. And that life is here already. It's coming. It will be consummated, fulfilled later, but it's already here. Here and now, we experience that eternal life, that spiritual life through Jesus and through his spirit.

[9 : 49] But the second kind of life that Jesus imparts is resurrection life, because he says that that is coming, but it's not now here. So that's going to happen at his second coming.

The first life came, his first coming, the second life comes at his second coming, when he raises the dead, the bodies of the dead. So the resurrection of the body, our souls with God will be reunited with our bodies, and as our whole beings, we'll be able to worship God and be with him in heaven. And that's both of these things, imparting eternal life in both of these senses, are the prerogative of the Son of God. That's what Jesus gets to do. And this, consistently throughout the Old Testament, taught is uniquely a divine prerogative.

So a king says this, an Israelite king says this to a Syrian king, who sends him a man, a commander of his army, effective with leprosy, saying, heal him. You have prophets in your nation, heal him. And then the Israelite king is indignant. He says, am I God to kill and to make alive, that this man sends word to me to cure a man of his leprosy? Am I God? So giving life, whether it's through birth, like we see in the Huckins family, a birth of a new daughter, whether it's that kind of birth, or whether it's life, spiritual life, eternal life that he imparts, life comes from God.

[11 : 11] That's a uniquely divine privilege. And Jesus says, he does that, because he is the Son of God. That is the immensity, the extent of the Son's authority.

Now, if that's the extent of his authority, then where does he get that authority? What is the origin of his authority? And this passage teaches us, in a way that really, a few other passages in the Bible do, that this authority of the Son is tied uniquely to his relationship, the way he relates to the Father. Now, first, the origin of the Son's authority is the Father's love. Verses 19 to 20, it says, for whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise, for the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing.

Did you guys catch that? The reason why Jesus has this authority is because the Father loves him. And because the Father loves Jesus, he shows Jesus all that he is doing.

And because Jesus does all that he is doing, he is able to reveal God the Father to us. So this has really powerful implications that affect our understanding of God's revelation to us and God's redemption of us.

[12 : 31] Because the reason why Jesus is the ultimate revelation of God, the reason why Jesus is the only way to God, we can't really, we can't get to know God the Father through any other means, through any other person, because Jesus uniquely, as the Son of God, is loved by the Father.

And because the Father loves him, he shows him everything that he does. That's why he's able to reveal God to us. And then, and that means that it has great applications for us, right?

Because then when we're seeking God, when we want to get to know God, we don't rely on our own philosophical explorations or spiritual meditations, but we learn from watching and hearing from, getting to know Jesus, because he reveals God to us.

And then secondly, it has implications for our redemption. And because even before our redemption, our salvation depends on God's love for us, it depends on God's love for his Son. That's prior to even his love for us. And it's because the Father loves the Son, and the Son, in response, reciprocates that love, loves the Father, and wants to obey him.

[13 : 42] That's why he comes, to obey his Father, out of love for his Father. That's why he comes. And so that's, that means, and this is, I think, such a beautiful thing.

I pray that you guys get this, because I can't adequately express it, but there's so much beauty there, that God, the Father, loving the Son, the Son, loving the Father, that's the origin, that's the basis, for any love from God, that we get to experience.

And we simply get enveloped, into that love, get carried into that love. That's beautiful. And so then, if we really get that, then we recognize, that we're not the center, of the universe.

God doesn't revolve around us. We revolve around him, and his perfect love, within the Trinity. And it's only, when we recognize that, that we will see God's love, as a privilege, as an undeserved privilege, and not as an entitlement.

And then we can truly live, to please and glorify God. So, to summarize that, God's revelation, and redemption, both are an overflow, of the reciprocal love, between the Father, and the Son.

[14:48] And that's, the origin, of the Son's, authority. There's a second origin, mentioned in this passage, and that's in verse 26. So, the first was, the Father's love, and the second, is the Father's life.

Verse 26 says, for as the Father, has life in himself, so he has granted, the Son, also to have, life in himself. This refers, to an attribute of God, called, aseity, or self-existence.

Which means, that God has life, or being, in himself, unlike the rest, of creation, which just has, derivative existence. We, we have life, because God gives us life, because we're dependent, on him.

We are creatures, but God is not like that. He has life, in himself. I mean, to illustrate that, it's kind of like, if you have, photo, luminescent objects, like, glow-in-the-dark, stickers, maybe that you put, on your ceilings, when you turn the lights off, it glows, because it has, absorbed some light, and it was there, from the original source, and then it just kind of, radiates that, emits that light.

This is like, or like your clock dial, maybe that has, glow-in-the-dark properties, like, we're like that, right? We don't have, we can't generate light, on our own. We have no life, of our own. Rather, we reflect, what we see, we absorb the life, from the source, and we just, we admit it.

[16:08] That's what we do. That's what all creatures do. That's what all creation does. But God is different, and the son of God, like his father, is self-existent. He has life, in himself, and that's why, he's able to give life, to others.

Because he's the source. He's the original. He doesn't have, a derivative existence, like we do. So the father's love, for him, and the father's life, that he shares, these two things, give him the authority, to impart eternal life.

That's the origin, of the son's authority. And this, is the part that Jesus, trying to get to now. Next, is having established, the extent of his authority, and the origin of his authority, we finally see, the evidence.

So, what's the proof? Why do you, why should we believe, that Jesus has the authority, to do this? And he gives his answer, in three parts. And first, is his works. Second, his father.

And third, his scriptures. He says, all three of these things, bear witness about him, about his authority. Jesus, you could, I mean, you could add John the Baptist, in there if you want to, because he does briefly mention, John the Baptist.

[17:13] But he makes it very clear, that John the Baptist's testimony, is not what validates him, because that's still, in the end, merely the testimony, of other men. And Jesus, indeed, does not need to be validated, by that.

His validation comes, rather, from his father, from God. That's demonstrated, in his works, his father's testimony, and his scriptures. Read verse 36, with me. It says, Jesus says, but 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. Now, so this is the first category, the works.

These works, that the father, that Jesus does, in his ministry, which includes, the miraculous signs, that he performs, like healing the invalid. And ultimately, though this hasn't happened yet, his death, and resurrection, from death.

Those works, demonstrate, prove, his authority. And, this, we might be skeptical, of this, as modern people, we like to think, oh, we're, you know, advanced, you know, modern people, who are not as credulous, as people from the ancient times.

[18:26] And so for us, how can you say, that these miraculous signs, really happen? How can they really be a proof, of Christ's authority? And that, to say that would be, to fall susceptible, to what C.S. Lewis calls, chronological snobbery, right?

Because, people back then, didn't believe, that people rose from the dead either. And people back then, didn't believe, that the invalid of 30 years, walked either. They didn't. That's why they're

recorded here, because it amazed them, because it was, extraordinary, not ordinary. That's why it's written, in the gospels. So in the same way, those works, have proved to these people, the authority of the son, they can, to us, serve as a meaningful, demonstration, of the son's authority.

And this is unique, to Christianity. There's, there's an author, named C. Michael Patton, who wrote a book, recently called, Now That I'm a Christian. And in the book, he writes about, how Christianity, is the world's, most falsifiable religion.

And what he means, by that is this, is that, if, look at any other religion, look at Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, all the major religions, look at them, examine them, and they start, something like this. [19 : 33] It starts with, the private vision, or a dream, you have about God, or a private idea, you have about God, or a philosophy. And then, you share this, with people, and this one person's testimony, becomes the basis, for the religion.

Because it's a private dream, a private vision, a private idea, you have no way, objectively verify, anything, that this person claims. It's in the person's dream, or vision. There's no way, to verify it. But Christianity, is very different. Jesus has a public ministry, Jesus has a public, public death, Jesus has a public resurrection, and then he has a public testimony, and all the people, who saw him, tell people, about what they saw.

See, you see, if you want to start a religion, if you want to start a cult, you don't go out saying, well, I'm going to die, and I'm going to rise again, in three days. Because if you do, that religion is not going to go anywhere, because you're going to die, and you're not going to rise, in three days. Right? That's not what you do. But Jesus said that, and Christianity endured, and it is now, the largest religion in the world. Why? Because it actually happened. That's not how you start a religion. [20 : 38] These works that Jesus did, they proved, they show the Son's authority, in a way that no other religion can claim. And then second, the Father himself bears witness, about the Son.

Jesus says, in verses 37 to 38, And the Father who sent me, has himself borne witness, about me. His voice you have never heard, His form you have never seen, and you do not have His word, abiding in you.

For you do not believe, the one whom He has sent. Now, this is a general reference, to all the ways, in which the Father, reveals Himself through His Son. But you could tell, from what Jesus is saying, about these people, He accuses them, of not seeing God, not hearing His voice, not hearing His voice, not seeing His form, and not having His word.

And those three things, are exactly what Jesus does. So if you have an ambassador, from a nation, and that ambassador, faithfully reflects, the desires and purposes, of the king, or the president, that sent that ambassador, then that's a good evidence, that's a good sign, that that ambassador, was actually from that king, or from that president.

Now, Jesus is saying here, that He shows, He speaks the voice of God, He has the form of God, and He is the word of God, and so in His ministry, in all that He does, the Father Himself, is bearing witness about Him.

[22 : 04] Right? And because He is, as it says in verse 25, 29, He has the voice, that raises the dead, He says. That's the voice of God. God. And in Philippians 2, 6, that He was in the very form of God, and in this same book, John 1, 18, it says, No one has ever seen God.

The only God, this is Jesus, who is at the Father's side, He has made Him known. So the Son has the Father's voice, the Son has the form of God, and then Son, of course, is the word of God, as John 1 told us.

And because Jesus is all of these things, the Father has abundantly attested, to who Jesus actually is. The Father Himself has borne witness, to the authenticity, and authority of His Son.

And finally, even more, not even more, but finally, the last thing, that His works and His Father bear witness about the Son, but there's one more thing, and that's the Scriptures. Verse 39, You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them, you have eternal life, and it is they that bear witness about Me.

Jesus says that all the Scriptures that you have been reading all your life, that you've been memorizing, that you've been studying, they're about Me. They bear witness about Me.

[23 : 19] And for us, when I say, well, yeah, of course, the New Testament is all about Jesus, but the New Testament is not written yet, at this point. He's talking about the Old Testament. All of the Old Testament, from the Pentateuch, from Genesis, to Psalms, to the historical books, they all bear witness about Jesus.

That's what He's saying. Right? So, and you might wonder how that's the case, but through direct prophecies, but also through types, for example, of figures, of persons, and institutions, like the Sabbath, the temple, the Passover, King David, Moses, all these things prefigure Christ, who is to come in the New Testament.

So Jesus says, really, all you could rightly say, all of Scripture, every verse, is about Him. They point to Him. And the Jews were missing that, that very important point, the very purpose of the Scriptures.

They diligently studied the Scriptures. The word search there suggests diligent study. So the Jewish leaders were dedicated to the Scriptures. But what Jesus says to them here shows that there's nothing intrinsically life-giving about reading the Scriptures.

You can't just read the Scriptures and expect to have eternal life. It's not merely just in the reading, but it's through encountering Christ in your reading of Scripture that you are given eternal life.

[24 : 41] It's not to say the Scriptures are not powerful. They are. They're powerful. They're precious. Because the living God breathes through these pages.

He breathes through pages. We can meet Him here. Not because the Bible itself saves us, but because the Christ who saves is revealed in the Scriptures.

And understanding this is crucial. If you're a believer and you try to do Bible reading on a daily basis, this is important for keeping us from treating Bible reading legalistically.

Because Bible reading can easily become an end in and of itself. And so we say, Well, that's something that I just have to do. I have to check it off the list today. I have to do it. No. Then that becomes legalistic.

But that's not the purpose of the Scriptures. The purpose of the Scriptures is to let us hear from Jesus. Let us behold the face of Jesus. Let us talk to Jesus. Let us encounter Him through the pages of Scripture.

[25 : 40] That's the purpose. So it's no longer legalistic when you approach your Bible. No, you come to meet Him. You come to have life with Him. And if you are, have tried Bible reading, I wanted to use this opportunity to put in a little plug for a Bible reading plan.

Since the new year is coming up, if you don't have a regular way in which you engage, meet and encounter Christ through the Word, I encourage you strongly to try that. So I printed off some Bible reading plans in the back that you guys can grab.

This one is a good plan that has only 25 days of reading assigned per month because most often people try for like the first month, they fall behind, and they get too discouraged, and they discontinue.

So this plan kind of already looks ahead and says, you know what, you are going to fall behind, so I'm just going to give you 25 days. So when you fall behind, you have time to catch up. And if you are ahead, then that's a good time, opportunity for you to really study and delve into specific passages in a deeper way.

So I encourage you to do that. Consider that because Scripture is precious to us, the precious means by which we encounter Christ. And if you're not a believer, you don't yet believe that the Scripture is compelling, that Scripture is reliable, then I encourage you to read the Bible for yourself.

[26 : 58] Really, just as the proof of the putting is in the eating, really the best proof of the Bible is not some historical argument about its reliability, even though that is important, and the Bible is the most historically attested and the most rigorously examined piece of ancient literature in existence, but notwithstanding that the best proof of the Bible still is in the reading because it says in 2 Corinthians 4, there's a light of the gospel of the glory of Christ that you can see in God's Word as the Spirit works through Him.

The light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, that's what's going to ultimately convince you of the authority of the Son and the evidence, the compelling evidence that Scripture is. So then, having witnessed the extent of the Son's authority, the origin of His authority, and the evidence of the Son's authority, the appropriate response for us is to believe that Jesus is the Son of God who imparts eternal life.

And Jesus says something that's very revealing about those of us who do not believe. And He says of those who refuse to believe in Him, verse 40 and 42, He says, You refuse to come to Me that you may have life.

I know that you do not have the love of God within you. Did you guys catch the two things that the people who refuse Him lack? It's life and love.

The two very things that gave Jesus the authority, the origin of His authority, the love of the Father, the life of the Father that He has. Because He uniquely has those things, if you reject Him, you will have no life, no spiritual life.

[28 : 50] You will have no love of the Father. And why do people reject Him? And Jesus tells us that too in verse 41 and 44. In contrast to Jesus, Jesus says in verse 41, I do not receive glory from people.

He's saying, I don't need any validation from people. He says, I don't receive glory from people, He says. But in contrast to Jesus, it says in verse 44, For those who fail to believe in Him receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God.

Like a student that cares more about what his or her peers think than what her teacher thinks, we seek glory and receive glory from one another rather than seeking the glory that comes from the only God.

This tragic situation reminds me of a tagline of a ministry that supports churches called Nine Marks. They have a tagline that says, Ask the Bible, not the crowd.

It's a really good tagline. Because unfortunately, a lot of times, we do exactly the opposite. We ask the crowd, but not the Bible. We ask self-help books, blogs, newspapers, pundits, magazines.

[30 : 08] We ask Oprah. We ask the Daily Show. We ask our peers. We ask even ourselves. But we don't ask the only God. We want to be perceived as enlightened by those around us and not be enlightened by the actual light of God that shines from the only God.

And I plead with you to ask yourself this morning, Do I really believe that Jesus is the Son of God who imparts eternal life?

God has spoken. God has spoken. The Father has borne witness through the works, through His own testimony, and through the Scriptures. He tells us that Jesus is the authoritative Son of God. And it's only when we as people choose to listen to the only God rather than all these noises and opinions and voices around us. It's only when we choose to please the only God rather than the countless expectations and demands placed on us by those around us.

That's when we really begin to live. That's when we begin to have spiritual life. That's what it means to inherit eternal life. So I pray you consider this and delay no longer, but believe in Jesus this morning.

[31 : 28] Let's pray together. God, we do believe.

Now help our unbelief. We pray that you would help us so that our belief in your testimony regarding your Son would have functional priority and authority in our lives.

Help us to seek you, listen to you daily. More than we seek the voices and opinions of anything or anyone else.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.