

**Introduction:**

Today, I want to talk to you about **the claims of Christ**. And what are they? You will recognise them as I say: “I am the bread of life” – John 6:35; “I am the light of the world” – John 8:12; “I am the door” – John 10:9; “I am the good shepherd” – John 10:11; “I am the true vine” – John 15:1; “I am the way, the truth and the life” – John 14:6

Those are examples of the claims of Christ, statements He made about Himself. You will not only find these in the pages of Scripture, but you will also find these in any Christian bookstore, on T-shirts, posters, bumper stickers, key rings, wall ornaments, necklaces, bracelets, coffee cups, etc. But these were never meant to merely adorn our clothing or our coffee cups – they were meant to make radical changes in our lives and in the lives of those around us, changes as radical as the claims themselves.

The way God really wants to present the claims of Christ to the world is through us – His children. Today we will discover the radical claims of Christ and I guess the question we all can ask ourselves is: “*Have the claims of Christ made a radical change in our lives?*” You see, these claims are not meant to be framed and put on a wall only, they are meant to be framed into a life. They are meant to change our whole course of life, not to just decorate the exterior of our car or the base of our necks.

We’re not going to examine all His claims today, but we are going to examine six of them in the 5<sup>th</sup> chapter of the Gospel according to John. As we turn to this chapter, understand that these claims are not just meant to be learnt but to be lived.

**BACKGROUND**

Let me remind you that what we’re about to read comes directly after the miraculous healing of a man who had been sick for thirty-eight years. But the legalists of the day scandalised this merciful act because it took place on the Sabbath. They said that Jesus broke the law of God, but as we saw last time, He never broke the law of God by healing the man. Jesus broke the law of their tradition and the additional uncompassionate rules they added to Jewish law, and for this Jesus incurred a whirlwind of religious wrath and they now began to plot his assassination.

Now, for the first time in John, in response to the legalists, Jesus makes a lengthy presentation of who He really is. This is the first of a series of discourses in the gospel of John.

**DISCOURSE**

**A. General Answer (vv.16-18).** As we begin, I want you to notice the major statement Jesus makes in verse 17 which lays the foundation for the rest of the passage. This is not necessarily a claim, but a general answer which sets the stage for the dramatic performance He’s about to lay upon the listeners. He tells them that God is constantly engaged in works of mercy, compassion, wrath and judgement. That He is engaged in keeping the universe in place, That He is calling, sending, shaping, changing lives. And now the Lord Jesus says, “I am engaged in the same because it is MY Father who is doing that work.” The following verse reveals that this answer sets in motion a massive backlash of resistance.

**B. Specific Claims (vv.19-30).** Let’s move from the general and get specific, and see what Jesus is really telling them.

### **1. “I am equal with God” (vv.19-20)**

The legalist men who were there were intelligent men, in fact, they were brilliant men. They immediately got not only what Jesus said, but also what He implied. He was saying in effect, “I am equal with God.” That was His first claim here – read verses 19-20. He was claiming to be equal to God. He says, “What the Father does, I see; what the Father does, I do. I have the same power God has. And God has put me on this earth to carry out His plan. I am doing His work and I am doing it with equal power, as if He personally were here in the flesh doing it – or in fact He is.”

Jesus Christ is claiming equality with God. Now, frankly, that’s a hard one for us to grasp. We have great difficulty in understanding the Trinity fully, and we probably never will until we see them face-to-face. However we know this, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit have equal attributes although each one is a distinct personality, with distinct plans and purposes to be carried out. They are not to be identified as one and the same apart from being the Godhead.

One illustration is like this: I remember when I first discovered my own shadow. I was walking down the hallway once and I soon realised that I had a companion beside me. It would mimic my every move. Now the shadow wasn’t me, but it was inseparably linked to me. So it is with Jesus in a sense: God cast His shadow upon the earth whilst Christ walked among us. One writer once said, “God pitched His tent on earth, and tabernacled among man for 33 ½ years.”

### **2. “I am the giver of life” (vv.21,26)**

Here’s the next claim of Christ: “I am the giver of life.” Also, look at verse 26. Now, in order to give life, you must be the source of life. This truth never rings truer than with a loved one. Some of you have experienced a relative or friend who has died, maybe even in your very presence. It wouldn’t matter if the whole room was filled with medical doctors, no-one can give life to a person who has died. *Man can give medicine when sickness comes, food when hunger comes, help when weakness comes, love when loneliness comes. But when death comes, man can give only sympathy, only compassion. But never the gift of life. Only God can do that.*

It's the same in the spiritual realm. Not a person in this world can say, “I can handle it myself. I can build the life I need to handle myself in eternity.” No-one can do that but Jesus – physically and spiritually. See in John 1:4-5 – it states that in Jesus was life. And later in John 11 we see that Jesus is the source of life very practically in the story concerning the raising of Lazarus.

### **3. “I am the final judge” (vv.22-23).**

Jesus next goes on to say, “I am the final judge.” I’m sure if I would have given out a sheet of paper with one question on it to everyone who came here this morning, most of you would have answered it the same. If the question was: “Who is the final judge of man?” I’m sure most of you would have answered, “God is”, meaning, God the Father. But I want you to see that this is not the case. The Bible teaches that God the Father has delegated all judgement to God the Son. But why did He do that for? The answer is in verse 23: “That all may honour the Son just as they honour the Father” – and there’s another statement concerning the Son’s equality with God.

Let me ask you this: What is the correct term to address the judge in a court of law? It’s not ‘buddy’. It’s not ‘mate’. You call the judge, “Your honour”, and you treat that judge with reverence and respect – if you know what’s good for you! That’s what this is saying. God has given all judgement to the Son, and so all men are to say to Him, “Your honour” and give Him that place of recognition.

Now, the sad part about this is that not all men will recognise Jesus as, “Your honour”, in life. After death, many will be in hell in torment waiting for their name to be called. The Bible says that at the second resurrection, they will be made to stand before Christ at the Great White Throne Judgement, and there they must bow their knee to Jesus Christ – but, regrettably, they cannot do anything to change their destiny because they did not want Christ in this life – which brings us to the fourth claim of Christ.

#### **4. “I determine everyone’s destiny” (v.24)**

Some versions will begin this statement with, “verily, verily” or “truly, truly”. That is just like a town crier who would call out, “here ye, here ye”, drawing everyone’s attention to this all-important claim.

You want to know how to pass from a deserved death in hell to an undeserved life in eternity? Listen carefully. There’s only one way... it must be through Jesus Christ. There is no other way. He doesn’t only claim to be the final judge, but He claims to be the ticket out of standing in that final courtroom for the guilty. He is the determiner of destinies – your destiny, my destiny.

You won’t hear a word about doing good works. You won’t hear a word about church attendance, keeping the law, trying your best, being a good bloke who is morally upright and pays his taxes and bills. Though these things are important facets of the Christian faith, they do not gain entrance into God’s family. God’s family is entered only by faith in God’s Son. Look at the means in verse 24: A hearing ear to hear the word; a believing heart to believe in the Son; look at the result – eternal life, no condemnation, a crossing over from death to life. It’s the only way.

So many Christians today are afraid of some kind of judgement. Listen to me, the non-Christian’s judgement is ahead of him, the Christian’s judgement is behind him. Praise be to God! The only judgement awaiting believers is that of our works, and the rewards we will receive for what we did for Christ, not for our salvation. Jesus Christ was judged on our behalf, and in Him and in Him alone lays our ticket to eternal life in heaven. He paid the price for our guilt, and we stand free in His righteousness.

On that awesome and fearsome day of the courtroom, known as the Great White Throne Judgement, untold millions of unbelievers will be raised to stand before the Judge, and Jesus will declare, without exception, their doom. You see, apart from Jesus Christ, there is no eternity with God. There is eternity but it won’t be with God. There might be some people here, and God sent you to hear this message about His marvellous Son and the life He has to offer.

#### **5. “I will raise the dead” (vv.25, 28-29)**

Now, here’s another dramatic claim of Christ. There are several things that can be said just on observing the passage. *First*, there will definitely be life after death (v.25). *Second*, every person will be affected by it – notice verse 28, “all who are in their graves will hear it”. *Third*, after this, mankind will fall into one of two, and only two, categories – the saved and the lost (v.29), depending on one’s faith in Jesus Christ.

Let me try to clarify some misunderstanding about this passage. It seems to indicate that eternal destiny is based on our deeds – good or evil. Wouldn’t some of you like to ask what that’s all about, especially after what we’ve just spoken about? The answer is that in the Scriptures you will often find a reference about salvation being based upon good deeds. When Jesus presents truth, He presents it as a resultant fact. What that means is that good deeds are a result of one’s right relationship to Jesus Christ. Evil deeds come as a result of one not rightly related to the Lord Jesus.

Although Jesus doesn't clarify the means to doing good or evil in the Gospels, this is where the Epistles go on to greatly clarify how this works. For example, "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10). I won't spend any more time on this point but let us understand that "those who have done good" are because those who have found goodness in Christ, and "those who have done evil" referencing those who have yet to come to that decision and those who may never.

I hope we haven't missed the simple point that when Jesus says "I will raise the dead," that means you, and that means me. It means every person sitting here right now. *There's a true story of three men who were very skilled at hunting with their rifles and then went to India to hunt. In this true story, one of these men was a Christian who wanted so much to share his faith with these other two. One evening they were sitting around their campfire and the subject came up, 'The most exciting moment of their lives'. Each one taking a turn and our Christian friend was last. The first man told that his most exciting moment was when he bagged a rare black panther just about to make its leap upon him. The second man told of shooting in central Africa a great bull elephant. The Christian waited his turn and sensed that this was his one moment and he said, "My most exciting moment is going to be in the future... one second after I die."*

Where will you be? You will hear His voice... some to a resurrection of life, some to a resurrection of judgement.

#### **6. "I am always doing the will of God" (v.30)**

There is one final claim Christ makes in verse 30. "I do not seek to please myself" – which is another way of saying, "I haven't come to do my own will". How different that is from man. There is implied in verse 30 a consistent seeking and carrying out the will of God. John 8:28-29 echoes this once again, "I always do what pleases Him." What a remarkable statement! His very being on the earth is to carry out the will of the Father. Jesus didn't come to make a good secure future for Himself, to have a book written about Himself, to gain a large following, nor to be some sort of pretentious know-it-all. Jesus came to do what God the Father wants done.

And so, let's be reminded again at the claims of Christ we covered today:

- 1. "I am equal with God" (vv.19-20)**
- 2. "I am the giver of life" (vv.21,26)**
- 3. "I am the final judge" (vv.22-23).**
- 4. "I determine everyone's destiny" (v.24)**
- 5. "I will raise the dead" (vv.25, 28-29)**
- 6. "I am always doing the will of God" (v.30)**

#### **Conclusion**

Those claims are not just meant to adorn your walls, cars, or keys. Jesus claimed these things so that He might capture your heart. And these claims leave you with a decision to make an equally radical commitment to Christ.

Everyone here is intelligent enough, you've read the facts for yourself and you are able to make up your own mind. You can make your own decision who Christ is in your life, as long as you understand that your decision will determine your destiny. I urge you, if you haven't already done so, please accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Saviour. Let us pray.