

1. **Introduction:** Some people say Jesus never intended to claim to be divine. Jesus says otherwise. In John 5, Jesus makes a series of statements about His relationship to the Father that Jews of Jesus' time would have clearly understood as unequivocal claims to be divine.
 - These statements were made at a time when Jewish authorities were increasingly distressed at Jesus for what they considered to be violations of religious standards and traditions. One concern was their conviction Jesus was deliberately violating the Sabbath.
 - Over many years, Jewish scholars had interpreted Scripture to establish an elaborate and rigid set of detailed rules for what could and could not be done on a Sabbath.
 - Jesus and His disciples had at times deviated from the rules. All 4 gospels report Sabbath day disputes between Jesus and the Jewish authorities. The disputes were sharp and became a factor in increasing the desire of the authorities to be rid of Jesus.
 - John 5 begins with Jesus healing a crippled man on a Sabbath. At first the man did not know who healed him. Later at the Temple, Jesus confronted him about sin. The man then told Jewish authorities it was Jesus who healed him. That triggered the authorities.
2. **OT Forbids Work on a Sabbath:** The key question was, what human activities if done on a Sabbath would constitute "forbidden work?" The OT position seems to be that a person should not pursue their customary work on a Sabbath. That day should be devoted primarily to worship and rest.
 - That broad principle leaves questions about details unanswered. People wanted guidance on specific activities that were forbidden, and scholars were glad to oblige.
 - What did they decide? What specific activities are forbidden on a Sabbath? Rabbinic scholarship produced 39 classes of forbidden activities. From their classifications they produced detailed lists. The lists were "nitpicky" and heavily laden with human opinion.
 - Jesus healing the crippled man was considered forbidden Sabbath work. Another thing considered forbidden work was that Jesus and His disciples had picked grain and ate it while walking through a field.
 - When Jesus healed the crippled man, He was immediately accused of violating the Sabbath.
3. **The Significance of John 5:17-47:** The entire section is a single discourse by Jesus in which He speaks to the Jewish authorities of Israel. The authorities are very upset at Jesus activities and the implications of things He had already said.
 - In these verses, Jesus speaks with the single purpose of declaring that He, Jesus, is the expected Messiah and more, that He is God. That declaration is offensive to the Jewish authorities who believe that Messiah is to be entirely human, a direct descendant of David, who was a great warrior, and a powerful, compassionate King.
 - Jesus incorporates His claim to be God in His defense of Sabbath activities. The Jewish authorities want to use His Sabbath activities as a reason for eliminating Him.

4. Jesus Response to the Claim He Violates the Sabbath: Beginning at 5:17, Jesus responds with a unique defense of His Sabbath activities, a defense that signifies He is divine.

- In John 5:16-47, Jesus makes two main points in addition to His defense against the accusation of violating the Sabbath. The two points are answers to questions: (1.) “How can a person know God?” (2.) “How can things people say about God be verified?”
- The answer to these two questions is of overwhelming importance. The most common answers in the Western world today are (1.) There is no way to know God (if there is one). (2.) There is no way to verify anything anyone might say about God.
- Answers are typically based on one of two positions. The first position is, if there is a God, then that God is silent. The second position is, there is no God, God does not exist. Therefore, “God talk” is meaningless. The concept of God has no meaning. In the second position, religious language has manipulative power but no rational value.
- Christians, however, know God exists and He is not silent. He has spoken clearly and distinctly in terms we can understand, and what He has said is true.
- In (Jn 5:16-30), Jesus teaches that we can know God because God the Father is revealed in God the Son who walked the earth as a man.
- In (Jn 5:31-47), Jesus provides evidence that verifies His claims. That evidence is given in accordance with the Law in the form of verification by 3 witnesses.

5. John 5:16: *So, because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jewish leaders began to persecute him.*

- The immediate reason the Jewish authorities were accusing Jesus was what they considered to be His blasphemous or forbidden Sabbath activities.

6. John 5:17-18: *In his defense Jesus said to them, “My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I too am working.”¹⁸ For this reason they tried 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 with God.*

- The defense Jesus makes for His Sabbath day activities rests on His unique relation to the Father and on the Father’s Sabbath activities. Jesus says, (5:17) ***“My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I too am working.”***
- Jesus’ opponents instantly grasp that by declaring God is His Father, Jesus was asserting that He was equal to God. They saw that as a challenge to the fundamental distinction between the holy, infinite God and finite, fallen human creatures.
- In the view of the authorities, Jesus had committed a great offense against the One God, Creator of the Universe, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.
- They considered the offense of claiming to work alongside God worse than the things Jesus had done earlier. They tried even harder to see that Jesus was killed (remember they saw Jesus as merely a man).

- What did Jesus mean by saying His Father is always at work. According to Genesis 2:2-3, on the 7th day of creation week, God rested from His creative work. Even Pharisees recognized God must do sustaining work on the Sabbath to keep creation functioning.
- Hebrews 4:3-10 shows that while God's 7th day rest from creating has never ended, God is engaged in ceaseless activity, sustaining and providing for the universe He created.
- God always works. His work includes not only physical sustaining and provision, but spiritual work like illuminating our understanding and convicting our consciences.
- If He ceased His sustaining of physical things work, the universe would disappear. If He ceased His spiritual work, churches would disappear, and all humanity would be lost.
- Gathering to worship and hear God's Word would make no sense if God was not active.
- The Father's work in the created universe continues without pause alongside His unbroken 7th day rest from creation activities. His is the continuous and perfect activity of the Living God, whose purposes and judgments are reflected in events of human history.
- When Jesus said, "***My Father is always at His work to this very day, and I, too am working,***" He meant that during Jesus' earthly activities they worked together.
- He also meant that He and the Father worked together in everything either of them had ever done. That is, Jesus claims to be a part of God's work from beginning to end.
- This is an important point in a correct understanding of who Jesus is. We must not restrict thoughts of Jesus to that special interval when He lived as the God-Man on earth. The true picture of Jesus recognizes Him existing and working with the Father from eternity

7. John 1:1-5: *In the beginning was the word and the word was with God, and the word was God.*¹ *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*² *He was with God in the beginning.*³ *Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.*⁴ *In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind.*⁵ *The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.*

- In comparison with eternity, the few thousand years of human history are nothing. Yet God so loved this world that He sent His only begotten Son to die to enable us to be redeemed so that we might live in Him.

8. John 5:19-23: *Jesus gave them this answer: "Very truly I tell you, 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."*¹⁹ *For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does. Yes, and he will show him even greater works than these, so that you will be amazed.*²⁰ *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.*²¹ *Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son,*²² *that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him.*

- Jesus is emphatic in stating His relationship with God the Father. Verse 5:19 states first negatively and then positively that Jesus is one with the Father.

- Jesus says, the Son can do nothing by Himself, but whatever the Father does, the Son also does. Notice that the reverse is also true. Whatever the Son does is also done by the Father. This verse is a clear claim of the Son's identity with God. If Jesus was speaking truth, then Jesus is God.
- Jesus' equality with God the Father does not mean Jesus ever acts independently from the Father, not even on the cross.
- Jesus and the Father are one in ways beyond our ability to understand. They are not autonomous beings. God is three persons, but One Being, One Essence.
- In the beginning, the Son was with God and was God – always obedient to the Father.
- Not only does the Son always do what pleases the Father (Jn 8:9), but He can do only what He sees His Father doing (Jn 5:19). That doesn't mean they function the same in their external work. They act in concert working toward the same goal.
- The Father initiates, sends, grants, commands, commissions, & wills. The Son responds, obeys, carries out His Father's will, and receives authority. Their minds are at unity with perfect alignment and coordination between their actions, yet they are distinct Persons.
- When Jesus says that He can only do what He sees the Father doing, it does not mean Jesus behaves like a robot, carrying out the directives of the Father without thinking.
- The incarnate Son is a Person with personality, intellect, and emotions. He faced real temptations without sinning. He experienced joy and suffered disappointments. But He never disobeyed the Father. He obeyed willingly and perfectly.
- When God redeems us, He calls us to obedience. What He calls us to do, He will enable. But our residual sin nature inclines us to be "captain of our own fate," making autonomous decisions.
- Only by our new nature cooperating with the Holy Spirit can we overcome our desire for a life of independence, totally autonomous. Our greatest happiness requires perfect dependence on Jesus' word – depending on His word for instructions on how to live our life, giving up on making decisions that fail to consider His commands and teachings.
- Following Christ is not robotic. Scripture says true freedom is found only "in Christ."
- In 5:20, Jesus says He and the Father are united in love. The Father loves the Son and shows Him all He does. The Son loves the Father and demonstrates His love through perfect obedience, even to the cross.
- The Apostle John says, God is love. God demonstrated His love for us in that, while we were yet sinners, He sent His Son to die that we might have life in the Son.
- About His relationship with the Father, Jesus says, the Father will show the Son even greater things than those specific things Jesus had already done.
- The first greater thing is in 5:21 which says the Son will give life to whom He pleases. ***"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."***

- Scripture teaches that the giving of life – whether life in physical birth, spiritual life, or the life of the resurrection is God’s prerogative.

9. **Deuteronomy 32:39**: God says, ***“I myself am He! There is no god beside me. I put to death and I bring to life.”*** **1 Samuel 2:6**: ***“The Lord brings death and makes alive; He brings down to the grave and raises up.”***

- The Jewish authorities knew Jesus’ claim to be able to give life meant a claim to be God.
- The other “greater thing” is in 5:22. The Son will Judge people on the Father’s behalf. ***“Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son.”***
- Scripture teaches that judgment belongs to God (Deuteronomy 1:17). So, when Jesus claimed He would be the One to judge, they recognized He was claiming to be God.
- Taken together, these statements set forth the claim that Jesus is God and acts with God from the beginning of all things to the end, from creation to the final judgment.
- God the Father committed “judging” to Jesus so ***“that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father.”*** The Son is honored when we acknowledge that He is who He says He is, has done what He says He has done, and will do what He says He will do.
- As part of His duty in judging, in Mark 10:45, Jesus said that He was going to the cross where He would give His life as ***“a ransom for many.”*** Those ransomed would not be judged.
- **Next**: John 5:24-30.