

Exposition of the Gospel of John CHAPTER 18

THE DEITY OF CHRIST: SEVENFOLD PROOF

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Transcript

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John 5:16-30

We present our customary Analysis of the passage which is to be before us. It sets forth the absolute equality of the Son with the Father:— 1. In Service, verses 16-18. 2. In Will, verse 19. 3. In Intelligence, verse 20. 4. In Sovereign Rights, verse 21. 5. In Divine Honors, verses 22-23. 6. In Imparting Life, verses 24-26. 7. In Judicial Power and Authority, verses 27-30. There is an intimate connection between the passage before us and the first fifteen verses of the chapter: the former provides the occasion for the discourse which follows. The chapter naturally divides itself into two parts: in the former we have recorded the sovereign grace and power of the Lord Jesus in healing the impotent man on the Sabbath day, and the criticism and opposition of the Jews; in the latter we have the Lord's vindication of Himself. The second half of John 5 is one of the profoundest passages in this fourth Gospel. It sets forth the Divine glories of the incarnate Son of God. It gives us the Lord's own teaching concerning His Divine Sonship. It also divides into two parts: in the former is contained the Lord's sevenfold declaration of His Deity; in the latter, beginning at verse 41, He cites the different witnesses to His Deity. We shall confine ourselves now to the former section. May the Spirit of Truth whose blessed work it is to "glorify" the One who is now absent from these scenes illumine our understandings and enable us to rightly divide this passage of God's inspired Word. The miracle of the healing of the impotent man, which engaged our attention in the last chapter, has several outstanding and peculiar features in it. The abject misery and utter helplessness of the sufferer, the sovereign action of the Great Physician in singling him out from the multitude which lay around the Pool of Bethesda, the total absence of any indication of him making any appeal to Christ or exercising any faith in Him previous to his healing, the startling suddenness and spontaneity of the miracle, the Lord's command that he should "take up his bed" on the Sabbath day, are all so many items that at once arrest the attention. The turning of the healed man's steps toward the Temple, evidenced that a work of grace had been wrought in his soul as well as in his body. The grace of the Lord is seeking him out in the Temple and the faithful words there addressed to his conscience, give beautiful completeness to the whole scene. All of this but serves to emphasize the enormity of what follows: As soon as the healed

man had learned Who it was that had made him whole, he went and "told the Jews that it was Jesus" (verse 15). What, then, was their response? Did they immediately seek this Blessed One who must be none other than their long-promised Messiah? Did they, like the prophetess Anna, give thanks unto the Lord, and speak "of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem" (Luke 2:38)? Alas, it was far otherwise. Instead of being filled with praise, they were full of hatred. Instead of worshipping the Sent One of God, they persecuted Him. Instead of coming to Him that they might have life, they sought to put Him to death. Terrible climax was this to all that had gone before. In chapter one we see "the Jews" ignorant as to the identity of the Lord's forerunner (John 1:19), and blind to the Divine Presence in their midst (John 1:26). In chapter two we see "the Jews" demanding a sign from Him who had vindicated the honor of His Father's House (John 2:18). In chapter three we are shown "a ruler of the Jews" dead in trespasses and sins, needing to be born again (John 3:7). Next we see "the Jews" quibbling or quarreling with John's disciples about purifying (John 3:25). In chapter four we learn of their callous indifference toward the Gentile neighbors—"the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans" (John 4:9). Then, in the beginning of chapter five, we read of "a feast of the Jews," but its hollow mockery is exposed in the scene described immediately afterwards—a "feast," and then "a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered? Now the terrible climax is reached when we are told, "And therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay him, because he had done these things on the sabbath day" (John 5:16). Beyond this they could not go, save, when God's time had come, for the carrying out of their diabolical desires. "And therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay him, because he had done these things on the sabbath day" (John 5:16). Unspeakably solemn is this, for it makes manifest, in all its hideousness, that carnal mind which is enmity against God. Here was a man who had been afflicted for thirty and eight years. For a long time he had lain helplessly by the pool of Bethesda, unable to step into it. Now, of a sudden, he had risen up in response to the quickening word of the Son of God. Not only so, he carried his bed, and walked. The cure was patent. That a wondrous miracle had been wrought could not be gainsaid. Unable to refute it, the Jews now vented their malice by persecuting the Divine Healer, and seeking to put Him to death. They sought to kill Him because He had healed on the Sabbath day. What a situation! They dared to put themselves against the Lord of the Sabbath. The One who had performed the miracle of healing was none other than the Son of God. In criticising Him, they were murmuring against God Himself. Therefore, we say we have here an out and out exposure of that carnal mind which is enmity against God: that carnal mind which, my reader, is by nature, in each of us. How this reveals the awful depravity of the fallen creature. How it demonstrates our deep need of a Savior! How it makes manifest that wondrous grace of God which provided a Savior for such incorrigible rebels. "But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work" (John 5:17). This was not the only occasion when the Lord Jesus was criticised for healing the sick on the Sabbath day, and it is most instructive to observe (as others before us have pointed out) the various replies He made to His opponents as these are recorded by the different Evangelists. Each of them narrates the particular incident (and the Lord's words in connection with it) that most appropriately accorded with the distinctive design of His Gospel. In Matthew 12:2, 3 we find that Christ appealed to the example of David and the teaching of the Law, which was well suited for record in this Gospel. In Mark 2:24, 27 we read that He said, "The sabbath was made for man," that is, it was designed to serve man's best interests—this in the Gospel which treats most fully of service. In Luke 13:15 we find the Lord Jesus asking, "Doth not each one of you on the sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering?": here, in the Gospel of Christ's humanity, we find Him appealing to human sympathies. But in John 5 Christ takes altogether higher ground and makes answer suited to His Divine glory. "But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." Here is the first of the seven proofs which Christ now gives of His absolute Deity. Instead of pointing to the example of David or

appealing to human sympathies, Christ identifies Himself directly with "the Father." In saying "My Father worketh hitherto and I work" He affirms His absolute equality with the Father. It would be nothing short of blasphemy for a mere creature—no matter how exalted his rank or how great his antiquity—to couple himself with the Father thus. When He speaks of "My Father... and I" there is no misunderstanding the claim that He made. But let us ponder first the pertinency of this affirmation. "My Father worketh hitherto." It is true that on the seventh day God rested from all His creative works. As we read in Genesis 2:3, "And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it He had rested from all His work which God created and made." That seventh day of rest was not needed by Him to recuperate from the toil of the six days' labor, for "the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary" (Isa. 40:28). No; but it is otherwise with the creature. Work tires us, and rest is a physical and moral necessity, and woe be to the man or woman who ignores the merciful provision "made for man." If we refuse to rest throughout one day each week, God will compel us to spend at least the equivalent of it upon our backs on a bed of sickness—"Be not deceived; God is not mocked." God, at the beginning, set before His creatures a Divine example, and pronounced the Day of Rest a "blessed" one, and blessing has always attended those who have observed and preserved its rest. Contrariwise, a curse has descended, and still descends, on those who rest not one day in seven. God not only blessed the seventh day, but He "hallowed" it and the word "hallow" means to set apart for sacred use. While it is true that God rested on that first seventh day from all His creative work, He has never rested from His governmental work, His providential work, supplying the needs of His creatures. The sun rises and sets, the tides ebb and flow, the rain falls, the wind blows, the grass grows on the weekly Rest Day as well as on any other. What we may term works of necessity and works of mercy—that is upholding and sustaining the whole realm of creation and the daily recurring needs of His creatures—God never rests from. Now says Christ, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." All through the centuries has the Father been working. Nor had His working been restricted to the material realm. In illuminating the understandings of men, in convicting their consciences, in moving their wills, had He also "worked hitherto." If, then, it was meet that God the Father worked with unremitting patience and mercy, if the Father ministered to the wants of His needy creatures on the Sabbath day, then by parity of reason it must also be right for God the Son, the Lord of the Sabbath, to engage in works of necessity and mercy on the weekly Rest Day. Thus the Lord Jesus unequivocally claims absolute equality with the Father in service. "Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the Sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God" (John 5:18). There was no mistaking the force of Christ's declaration. By saying "My Father... and I" He had done what, without the greatest impropriety, was impossible to any mere creature. He had done what Abraham, Moses, David, Daniel, never dreamed of doing. He had placed Himself on the same level with the Father. His traducers were quick to recognize that He had "made himself equal with God," and they were right. No other inference could fairly be drawn from His words. And mark it attentively, the Lord Jesus did not charge them with wresting His language and misrepresenting His meaning. He did not protest against their construction of His words. Instead of that He continued to press upon them His Divine claims, stating the truth with regard to His unique personality and presenting the evidence on which His claim rested. And thus did He vindicate Himself not only from the charge of Sabbath-violation in having healed by His Divine word a poor helpless sufferer on that day, but also of blasphemy, in making an assertion in which by obvious implication, was a claim to equality with God. Christ's claim to absolute equality with God only fanned the horrid flame of the enmity in those Jewish zealots—they "sought the more to kill him." A similar scene is presented to us at the close of John 8. Immediately after being told that the Lord Jesus said "Before Abraham was I am" (another formal avowal of His absolute Deity) we read, "Then took they up stones to cast at him" (verses 58, 59). So again in the

tenth chapter we find that as soon as He had declared "I and Father are one" Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him" (verses 30, 31). Thus did the carnal mind of man continue to display its inveterate enmity against God. "Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, Verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise" (John 5:19). This is a verse which has been a sore puzzle to many of the commentators, and one used frequently by the enemies of Christ who deny His Deity. Even some of those who have been regarded as the champions of orthodoxy have faltered badly. To them the words "The Son can do nothing of himself" seem to point to a blemish in His person. They affirm a limitation, and when misunderstood appear to call for a half apology. The only solution which seems to have occurred to these men who thus dishonor both the written and the incarnate Word, is that this statement must have reference to the humanity of Christ. But a moment's reflection should show that such a conclusion is wide of the mark. The second half of this nineteenth verse must be studied and interpreted in the light of the first half. It is to be noted that the verse opens by saying "Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, Verily, I say unto you, the Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do." What was it that He was replying to? Who was it that He was here "answering"? The previous verse quickly decides. He was replying to those who sought to kill Him; He was answering His enemies who were enraged because He had "made himself equal with God." In what follows, then, we have the Lord's response to their implied charge of blasphemy. In verse 19 we have the second part of the vindication of His claim that He and the Father were one. Thus it will be seen that the words "The Son can do nothing of himself" respect His Deity and not His humanity, separately considered. Or, more accurately speaking, they concern the Divine glory of the Son of God incarnate. "The Son can do nothing of himself but what he seeth the Father do." Does this mean that His ability was limited? or that His power was restricted? Do His words signify that when He "made himself of no reputation (R. V. emptied himself) and took upon him the form of a servant" (Phil. 2:7) that He was reduced to all the limitations of human nature? To all these questions we return an emphatic and dogmatic No. Instead of pointing to an imperfection, either in His person or power, they, rightly understood, only serve to bring out His peerless excellency. But here as everywhere else, Scripture must be interpreted by Scripture, and once we heed this rule, difficulties disappear like the mists before the sun. It will be seen that in verse 30 we have a strictly parallel statement, and by noting what is added there the one in verse 19 is more easily understood. "The Son can do nothing of himself" of verse 19 is repeated in the "I can do nothing of myself" in verse 30, and then in the closing words of verse 30 we find that the Lord explains His meaning by giving as a reason—"Because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me." The limitation is not because of any defect in His person (brought about by the incarnation) nor because of any limitation in His power (voluntary or imposed); it was solely a matter of will. "The Son can do nothing of himself," literally, "nothing out of himself," that is, "nothing" as proceeding from or originating with Himself. In other words, the force of what He said was this: 'I cannot act independently of the Father.' But was that a limitation which amounted to a defect? Indeed no; the very reverse. Do the words "God that cannot lie" (Titus 1:2) and "God cannot be tempted with evil" (James 1:13) point to a blemish in the Divine nature or character? Nay, verily, they affirm Divine perfections. It was so here in the words of Christ. But may it not be that Christ is here speaking in view of His mediatorial position, as the servant of the Father? We do not think so, and that for three reasons. In the first place, John's Gospel is not the one which emphasizes His servant-character; that is unfolded in Mark's. In this Gospel it is His Deity, His Divine glory, which is prominent throughout. Therefore, some explanation for this verse must be found consonant with that fact. In the second place, our Lord was not here defending His mediatorship, His Divinely-appointed works; instead, He was replying to those who deemed Him guilty of blasphemy, because He had made Himself equal with God. Our third

reason will be developed below. "The Son can do nothing of himself." This we have attempted to show means, "the Son cannot act independently of the Father." And why could He not? Because in will He was absolutely one with the Father. If He were God the Son then His will must be in perfect unison with that of God the Father, otherwise, there would be two absolute but conflicting wills, which means that there would be two Gods, the one opposing the other; which in plainer language still, would be affirming that there were two Supreme Beings which is, of course, a flat contradiction of terms. It was just because the Lord Jesus was the Son of God, that His will was in fullest harmony with the will of the Father. Man can will independently of God, alienated from Him as he is. Even the angels which kept not their first estate, yea, one above them in rank, the "anointed cherub" himself could, and did say, "I will" (see Isaiah 14:13 and 14, five times repeated). But the Son of God could not, for He was not only very Man of very man but also very God of very God. It was this in the God-man which distinguished Him from all other men. He never acted independently of the Father. He was always in perfect subjection to the Father's will. There was no will in Him which had to be broken. From start to finish He was in most manifest agreement with the One who sent Him. His first recorded utterance struck the keynote to His earthly life—"Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" In the temptation when assailed by the Devil, He steadfastly refused to act independently of God. "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me" ever characterized His lovely service. And, as He nears the end, we have the same blessed excellency displayed, as we behold Him on His face in the Garden, covered with bloody sweat, as He confronts the thrice awful Cup, yet does He say, "Not my will, but thine be done." "The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do." The word for "seeth" (blepo) signifies to contemplate, to perceive, to know. It is used in Romans 7:23; 11:8; 1 Corinthians 13:12; Hebrews 10:25, etc. When, then, the Son exerts His Divine power, it is always in the conscious knowledge that it is the will of the Father it should be so exerted. "The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise." Here is an assertion which none but a Divine person (in the most absolute sense of the term) could truthfully make. Because the Son can do nothing but what the Father does, so, on the other hand, "What things soever the Father doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise." Note well this word "likewise." Not only does He do what the Father does, but He does it as He does it, that is, in a manner comporting with the absolute perfections of their common Divine nature. But what is ever more striking is the all-inclusive "whatsoever." Not only does He perform His works with the same Divine power and excellency as the Father does His, but the Son also does all "whatsoever he (the Father) doeth." This is proof positive that He is speaking here not in His mediatorial capacity, as the servant, but in His essential character as one absolutely equal with God. We cannot refrain from quoting here part of the most excellent comments of the late Dr. John Brown on this verse:—"All is of the Father—all is by the Son. Did the Father create the universe? So did the Son. Does the Father uphold the universe? So does the Son. Does the Father govern the universe? So does the Son. Is the Father the Savior of the world? So is the Son. Surely the Jews did not err when they concluded that our Lord made Himself 'equal with God.' Surely He who is so intimately connected with God that He does what God does, does all God does, does all in the same manner in which God does it; surely such a person cannot but be equal with God." To this we would add but one word: Scripture also reveals that in the future, too, the will of the Father and of the Son will act in perfect unison, for, in the last chapter of the Bible we read that the throne of Deity on the new earth will be "the throne of God and of the lamb" (Rev. 22:1). But before passing on to the next verse let us pause for a brief moment to make application to ourselves. "The Son can do nothing of himself." How this rebukes the selfwill in all of us! Who is there among the saints who can truthfully say, I can do nothing at my own instance; my life is entirely at God's disposal? "For the Father loveth the Son, and showeth him all things that himself doeth: and he will show him greater works than these, that ye may marvel" (John 5:20).

Here again the carnal mind is puzzled. If Christ be the Son of God why does He need to be "shown." When we "show" a child something it is because it is ignorant. When we "show" the traveler the right road, it is because he does not know it. Refuge is sought again in the mediatorship of Christ. But this destroys the beauty of the verse and mars the unity of the passage. What seems to point to an imperfection or limitation in Christ's knowledge only brings out once more His matchless excellency. "For the Father loveth the Son and showeth him all things that himself doeth." The opening word "For" intimates there is a close connection between this and the verse immediately preceding, as well as with the whole context. It intimates that our Lord is still submitting the proof that He was "equal with God." The argument of this verse in a word is this: The Father has no secrets from the Son. Because He is the Son of God, the Father loveth Him; that is to say, because they are in common possession of the same infinite perfections, there is an ineffable affection of the Father to the Son, and this love is manifested by the Father "showing the Son all things." There is no restraint and no constraint between them: there is the most perfect intimacy because of their co-equality. Let me try to reduce this profound truth to a simple level. If an entire stranger were to visit your home, there are many things you would not think of "showing" him—the family portrait-album for example. But with an intimate friend or a loved relative there would be no such reluctance. The illustration falls far short we know, but perhaps it may help some to grasp better the line of thought we are seeking to present. But not only do the words "the Father loveth the Son" make manifest the perfect intimacy there is between them, but the additional words "showeth him all things that himself doeth" evidences another of the Divine glories of Christ, namely, the absolute equality of intelligence that there is between the Father and the Son. Let us again bring the thought down to a human level. What would be the use of discussing with an illiterate person the mathematics of the fourth dimension? What's the value of taking a child in the first grade and "showing" him the solution of a problem in algebra? Who, then, is capable of understanding all the ways and workings of God? No mere creature. Fallen man is incapable of knowing God. The believer learns but gradually and slowly, and only then as he is taught by the Holy Spirit. Even the unfallen angels know God's mind but in part—there are things they desire "to look into" (1 Pet. 1:12). To whom then could God show the full counsel of His mind? And again we answer, To no mere creature, for the creature however high in rank has no capacity to grasp it. The finite cannot comprehend the infinite. Is it not self-evident, then, that if the Father showeth the Son "all things that himself doeth" He must be of the same mind as the Father? that they are one, absolutely equal in intelligence! Christ has the capacity to apprehend and comprehend "all things that the Father doeth," therefore, He must be "equal with God," for none but God could measure the Father's mind perfectly. "The idea seems to be this, that the love of the Father, and of the Son, their perfect complacency in each other, is manifest in the perfect knowledge which the Son has of the period at which, the purpose for which, and the manner in which, the Divine power equally possessed by them is to be put forth. It is in consequence of this knowledge, as if our Lord had said—'That in this case (the healing of the impotent man) I have exercised Divine power while My Father was exercising it' "And He adds, 'Still further—still more extraordinary manifestations of this community of knowledge, will, and operation of the Father, and of the Son, will be made.' 'He will show him greater works than these, that ye may marvel,' or 'that ye shall marvel'; that is, we apprehend, 'the Son, in consequence of His perfect knowledge of the mind, and will, and operations of His Divine Father, will yet make still more remarkable displays of that Divine power which is equally His Father's and His own'—such displays as will fill with amazement all who witness them. What these displays were to be, appears from what follows: He had healed the impotent man, but He was soon to raise to life some who had been dead; nay, at a future period He was to raise to life all the dead and act as the Governor and Judge of all mankind" (Dr. John Brown). "For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will" (John 5:21). This verse

presents the fourth proof of Christ's Deity. Here He affirms His absolute equality with the Father in sovereign rights. This affords further evidence that the Lord Jesus was not here speaking as the dependent Servant, but as the Son of God. He lays claim to Divine sovereignty. The healing of the impotent man was an object lesson: it not only demonstrated His power, but it illustrated His absolute sovereignty. He had not healed the entire company of impotent folk who lay around the Pool; instead, He had singled out just one, and had made him whole. So He works and so He acts in the spiritual realm. He does not quicken (spiritually) all men, but those "whom He will." He does not quicken the worthy, for there are none. He does not quicken those who seek quickening, for being dead in sin, none begin to seek until they are quickened. The Son quickeneth whom He will: He says so, that ends the matter. It is not to be reasoned about, but believed. To quicken is to impart life, and to impart life is a Divine prerogative. How this confirms our interpretation of the previous verses! It is the Divine rights of Christ which are here affirmed. "For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will." The verse opens with the word "for," showing it is advancing a reason or furnishing a proof in connection with what had been said previously. In our judgment it looks back first to verse 19 and gives an illustration of "what things soever he (the Father) doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise"—the Father quickens, so does the Son. But there is also a direct connection with the verse immediately preceding. There he had referred to "greater works" than healing the impotent man. Here, then, is a specimen—quickeneth the dead: making alive spiritually those who are dead in sins. This is a further demonstration of His absolute equality with the Father. "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: That all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him" (John 5:22, 23). This declaration that the Father judgeth no man—better "no one"—is especially noteworthy. The Father is the One whom we might most naturally expect to be the Judge. He is the first who was wronged. It is His rights (though not His exclusively) which have been denied. His governmental claims have been set at naught. He was the One who sent here the Lord Jesus who has been despised and rejected. But instead of the Father being the Judge, He hath "committed all judgment unto the Son," and the reason for this is "that all should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father." There is then, or more correctly, there will be, absolute equality between the Father and the Son in Divine honors. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life" (John 5:24). Once more we find the Lord, as in verse 17, linking Himself in closest union with the Father: "heareth my Word, and believeth him that sent me." But as we have already dwelt at such length on the dominant thought running all through our passage, we turn now to consider other subordinate though most blessed truths. This verse has been a great favorite with the Lord's people. It has been used of God to bring peace and assurance to many a troubled soul. It speaks of eternal life as a present possession—"hath everlasting life," not shall have when we die, or when the resurrection morning comes. Two things are here mentioned which are evidences and results of having everlasting life, though they are usually regarded as two conditions. The hearing ear and the believing heart are the consequences of having eternal life and not the qualifications for obtaining it. Then it is added, "and shall not come into condemnation": this guarantees the future—"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1). No condemnation for the believer because it fell upon his Substitute. Another reason why the believer shall not come into condemnation is because he has "passed from death," which is the realm of condemnation, "into life." "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live" (John 5:25). This continues the same thought as in the previous verse, though adding further details. 'The dead shall hear:' what a paradox to the carnal mind! Yet all becomes luminous when

we remember that it is the voice of the Son of God they hear. His voice alone can penetrate into the place of death, and because His voice is a life-giving voice, the dead hear it and live. The capacity to hear accompanies the power of the Voice that speaks, and it is just because that Voice is a life-giving one that the dead hear it at all, and hearing, live. Here then is the sixth proof presented for the Deity of Christ: the Son claims absolute equality with the Father in the power to give life. "For as the Father has life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself" (John 5:26). This confirms what we have just said above, while bringing in one further amplification. The Father hath "life in himself." "It belongs to His nature; He has received it from no one; it is an essential attribute of His necessarily existing nature: He so has life that He can impart, withdraw, and restore it to whomsoever He pleases. He is the fountain of all life. All in heaven and in earth who have life, have received it from Him. They have not life in themselves" (Dr. John Brown). Now in like manner the life of Christ is not a derived life. "In him was life" (John 1:4). He is able to communicate life to others because the Father hath "given to the Son to have life in himself." The word "given" must be understood figuratively and not literally, in the sense of appointed, not imparted: see its usage in Isaiah 42:6; 49:8; 55:4. So also the word "given him to have," signifies to hold or administer. Thus, inasmuch as all creatures live and move and have their being in God, but in contrast from them Christ has "life in himself," He cannot be a mere creature but must be "equal with God." "And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man. Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation" (John 5:27-29). This brings us to the seventh proof for the absolute Deity of Christ: He is co-equal with the Father in judicial authority and power. "And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man." The "also" seems to point back to verse 22, where we are told, "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son." Judgment has been committed to the Son in order that all should honor Him even as they honor the Father. But here in verse 27 Christ gives an additional reason: the Father has also appointed the Lord Jesus to execute judgment "because he is the Son of man." It was because the Son of God had become clothed with flesh and walked this earth as Man, that He was despised and rejected and His Divine glories disowned. This supplies a further reason why it is meet that the Son of man should be Judge in the last great day. The despised One shall be in the place of supreme honor and authority. All will be compelled to bow the knee before Him; and thus will He be glorified before them and His outraged rights vindicated. Next follows a reference to the resurrection of all that are in the graves. These are divided into two classes. First, they that have done good unto the resurrection of life. This refers to the resurrection of the saints. They that have "done good" is a characteristic description of them. It has reference to their walk which manifests the new nature within them. In the previous verses (24, 25) we have had life, eternal life, imparted to the spiritually dead by the sovereign power of the Son of God. This is His own life which is communicated to them. The Christ-life within is seen by Christ-like acts without. This is forcibly and beautifully brought out in the language which the Lord Jesus here uses when referring to His people. Just as in Acts 10:38 the apostle sums up the earthly life of Christ by saying He "went about doing good," so here the Lord Jesus speaks of His own as "they that have done good," that is, have manifested His own life. These will come forth at the time of His appearing (1 Cor. 15:23; 1 Thessalonians 4:16); come forth "unto a resurrection of life" for then they shall enter fully and perfectly into the unhindered activities and joys of that life which is life indeed. "And they that have done evil" describes the great company of the unsaved. These, too, shall "come forth." All the ungodly dead will hear His voice, and obey it. They refused to hearken to Him while He spoke words of grace and truth, but then they shall be compelled to hear Him as He utters the dread summons for them to appear before the great white throne. They would not believe on Him as the Savior of sinners, but they will

have to own Him as "Lord of the dead" (Rom. 14:9). Unspeakably solemn is this. Not a vestige of hope is held out for them. It is not a resurrection of probation as some modern perverters of God's truth are now teaching, but it is the resurrection "unto damnation." Nothing awaits them but impartial judgment, the formal and public pronouncement of their sentence of doom, and after that nothing but an eternity of torment spent in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone. As they had sinned in physical bodies so shall they suffer in physical bodies. Instead of having glorified bodies, they shall be raised in bodies marred by sin and made hideous by evil—"shame and everlasting contempt" (Dan. 12:2) describes them. Though capable of enduring "tribulation and anguish" (Rom. 2:9) they shall not be annihilated by the flames (any more than were the physical bodies of the three Hebrews in Babylon's fiery furnace) but continue forever—"salted with fire" (Mark 9:49): the "salt" speaks of a preservative element which prevents decay. "I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me" (John 5:30). The first part of the verse need not detain us, for it has already received consideration under our exposition of verse 19. The second half of the verse adds a further word concerning the judgment. "My judgment is just:" this is profoundly solemn. Christ will deal not in grace, but in inflexible righteousness. He will administer justice, not mercy. This, once more, excludes every ray of hope for all who are raised "unto damnation." Two additional thoughts in connection with the Deity of Christ come out in these last verses. First, the fact that "all that are in the graves shall hear" the voice of Christ and shall "come forth," proves that He is far more than the most exalted creature. Who but God is able to regather all the scattered elements which have gone to corruption! Second, who but God is capable of acting as Judge in the Great Assize! None but He can read the heart, and none but He possesses the necessary wisdom for such a stupendous task as determining the sentence due to each one of that vast assemblage which will stand before the great white throne. Thus we see that from start to finish this wonderful passage sets forth the Godhood of the Savior. Let us then honor Him even as we honor the Father, and prostrate ourselves before Him in adoring worship. Let the interested reader study carefully the following questions preparatory to our next lesson on John 5:31-47:—

1. How many witnesses are there here to the Deity of Christ?
2. What is the meaning of verse 31?
3. What is the significance of the first half of verse 34, after Christ had already referred to "John"?
4. What warning is there in the second half of verse 35?
5. What is the force of "ye think" in verse 39?
6. Who is referred to in the second half of verse 43?
7. What is the moral connection between receiving honor of men and not believing in Christ? verse 44.

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