

☒ LIFE OF JESUS

March 21, 2021 | *The Authority of the Son*

PREPARATION

GETTING READY

Read John 5:16–30

Read John 5:1–15 for context

Pray God would help you to hear Jesus’s message and believe.

THIS WEEK

☒ KEY BIBLICAL TRUTH

Jesus’s ministry will be authenticated when He judges between those who will receive eternal life and those who will receive eternal judgment.

☒ THEOLOGY APPLIED

Jesus’s ministry is authenticated by the authority the Father gives Him to judge, but our fate will be determined before this authentication because Jesus will judge based on our response to His ministry. Thus, we must respond to Jesus with belief.

☒ MEDITATE

“Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.” (John 5:24)

GETTING STARTED

+Use this section to prepare your heart for the truths you will encounter this week and to connect this passage’s main point to your own life.

Q: *Have you ever had to make a decision before you knew all the facts? How did you make it?*

Q: *How would you define belief?*

The standard approach to medical care is that a doctor diagnoses the illness and then decides on a course of treatment. Occasionally, however, when someone is deteriorating too quickly, in an effort to save the person's life, doctors must decide upon a course of treatment before a diagnosis can be determined. Otherwise, the patient would pass away. The doctors have to look at the symptoms and information they have and determine the best course of action to save a life.

A similar situation arises in the context of Jesus's ministry. Jesus made radical claims that upset the Jewish leaders. When they demanded that Jesus substantiate His claims, He told them His ministry would be authenticated after the resurrection of the dead by God, and Jesus Himself would judge whether they would enter eternal life or eternal judgment. The problem was that Jesus's judgment would be based on their reception of His ministry, the very thing they were challenging. Thus, the Pharisees had to choose. Would they believe in and accept Jesus's ministry or not?

Q: *What can confirm our belief in Jesus's claims before we face the final judgment?*

Q: *Do you think it is fair for Jesus to judge humanity before we can authenticate His ministry?*

APPLICATION POINT – We face the same situation as the Jewish leaders. We too will be judged based on how we receive Jesus before His ministry can be authenticated. Is there any way for us to be confident in our decision to believe in Jesus's ministry? The Bible offers us two ways. First, Jesus performed numerous signs during His ministry. The purpose of a sign is to point to something else. Jesus's signs pointed to His divinity, which, if true, authenticate His ministry. These signs have been preserved for us in the Gospels, especially in the book of John. Second, the Holy Spirit works in our hearts to confirm what Jesus says and what the Bible says about Him. These signs and the work of the Holy Spirit do not authenticate Jesus's ministry in themselves, but they do support His claims and give us confidence in our decision to believe Jesus's ministry.

■ UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

+In John 5:16–30, Jesus countered the claims of the Jewish leaders who questioned His teaching and sought to kill Him for blasphemy.

1. THE UNITY OF THE FATHER AND THE SON
2. RESURRECTION AND JUDGMENT, PART 1
3. THE BASIS OF JUDGMENT
4. RESURRECTION AND JUDGMENT, PART 2

GOING DEEPER

+ *This section will go step-by-step through this passage in order to understand Jesus's response to the opposition from His own countrymen.*

1. THE UNITY OF THE FATHER AND THE SON

■ READ JOHN 5:16–19

Q: *Why were the Jews persecuting Jesus?*

Q: *Why was breaking the Sabbath a serious offense among the Jews?*

The context of this passage was addressed last week. Jesus had healed a lame man by the pool of Bethesda. The problem was that this healing took place on a Sabbath. The Jewish people had been exiled from their country because they had broken God's Law. Upon returning to their land, they struggled to maintain any semblance of control. They were consistently under the rule of foreign powers. To oppose their overlords and maintain a sense of identity in the land, the Jewish leaders emphasized keeping the law, including the Sabbath regulations. The Jews felt that Jesus's actions endangered their sense of national identity and their commitment to God's Law. In Jewish life, these were capital offenses.

From the perspective of John, however, this Jewish opposition to Jesus's ministry was persecution. John himself and the Christian communities he influenced were accustomed to persecution. By defining the Jewish opposition to Jesus's ministry as persecution, John created a measure of solidarity between them and Jesus.

Q: *What concerns do you see elevated above the continuation of Jesus's ministry in your church? Neighborhood? Country?*

Q: *How could Jesus have avoided this persecution?*

APPLICATION POINT – It would have been easy for Jesus to avoid the hardships He faced from the Jewish authorities. Just heal on a day other than the Sabbath. How hard is that? But to yield to these demands would undercut the nature of Jesus's transforming ministry. It is natural for us to want to avoid persecution. In many ways, we have been spared persecution in our modern Western context, but that is not guaranteed to continue. It is important for Christians to prepare themselves for persecution no matter what context they find themselves in. The best way to prepare for persecution is to learn how to hold loosely our possessions and even our lives. Learn to sacrifice for the spread of the gospel.

Q: *How was Jesus limited in His actions and ministry?*

Q: *How would you describe the relationship between the Father and the Son?*

In our scientific and technological age, we typically see limitations as a negative. Jesus, however, pointed to His limitations to defend His ministry from those who questioned His validity. Jesus asserted that He was limited to what the Father does. We do not often think of the limitations of Jesus's ministry, but this is an important claim concerning its validity. As the Jewish leaders criticized Jesus for breaking the Sabbath law, He responded by saying that if God had not allowed Him, He would not have been able to challenge their teaching on the Sabbath. Jesus pushed His point further by claiming that He was obligated to follow what the Father does. Thus, Jesus was claiming that His ministry could be perfectly identified with God's will.

Q: *How do you respond to assertions of absolute authority like Jesus was making?*

Q: *How is your ministry limited by what God wills?*

APPLICATION POINT – In an autonomous age, we recoil from the idea of limitations or outside control. As Christians, however, we are called to engage the world for the gospel of Jesus Christ. We do not get to determine the scope of our ministry or the direction it will go. There are numerous examples of people in our society who claim to be ministering for the sake of the gospel of Jesus Christ but are not limited by the parameters God, through His Word, has placed on authentic gospel ministry. Those who claim to minister for the cause of Christ but advocate practices that contradict the teachings of God’s Word are imposters. Just because something (or someone) claims to be Christian does not mean it is. This week evaluate any ministry you are involved in or donate to. Make sure they can make the same sort of claims Jesus made in this passage. If their ministry is not limited by the will of the Father, then you do not want anything to do with it.

2. RESURRECTION AND JUDGMENT, PART 1

■ JOHN 5:20–23

Q: *What are the “greater works” Jesus was referring to?*

Q: *What is the responsibility the Father delegates to the Son?*

The Jewish leaders marveled that Jesus healed a man on the Sabbath. Jesus told them to anticipate works more marvelous than this at the end of the age. According to Jesus, God will raise the dead at the end of the age, an idea that would have been controversial on its own in a Jewish context. God the Father will not take part in the judgment of humanity, however. He will delegate this responsibility to the Son. Since humanity will be judged on the basis of how they respond to the Son’s earthly ministry, it is appropriate for the Son to be the one who judges humanity. The Father’s delegation of the role of judge to the Son is also appropriate because it is a delegation of the honor due that role. Thus, the Father and Son share in equal honor.

Q: *What concerns or works draw your attention away from the “greater works” to come?*

Q: *What simple tasks can you do on a regular basis to remind yourself to live for eternity?*

APPLICATION – Most of what we do in life is directed toward our daily existence. We eat to give ourselves the strength to live for that day. We work to acquire the money we need to meet pay our bills. We sleep so we will be rested well enough for the next day. This is completely natural and necessary, but, since we spend so much energy focused on our lives now, even Christians can be lulled into acting as though our daily existence is all there is. We can counteract this mentality through Scripture reading and prayer, but it can also be helpful to adopt small habits that are not directly related to these spiritual disciplines. One man has committed to taking special care of a garden at his home. He believes that when Christ returns, he will renew the heavens and the earth. This man does not have the time to keep his entire lawn in immaculate condition, but he takes special care of a small part as a reminder to himself that this world is not all there is to live for. This week consider some small activity you can do regularly as a reminder that one day Jesus will return and usher in new heavens and a new earth that will last forever.

3. THE BASIS OF JUDGMENT

■ JOHN 5:24

Q: *What two activities did Jesus say determine whether He would judge someone favorably?*

Q: *What does it mean to pass from death to life?*

In verse 24, Jesus, who has been given the duty to judge all humanity, told His listeners what factors determine whether they would face death or eternal life in judgment. Those who hear His words and believe in the Father who sent Him to give those words will have eternal life.

Jesus's words reveal an important truth about humanity. In what could be described as our natural condition after the fall (Genesis 3), we are in a condemned state that warrants judgment and death. If nothing changes, we would deserve God's wrath. If, however, we hear the words of Jesus and are receptive of His ministry, we move from a condemned state to a redeemed state.

🔗: *What difference does it make for evangelism that our natural state is not neutral but condemned?*

🔗: *What does it mean to "believe" in the Father and in Jesus's words?*

APPLICATION POINT – As Christians, we do not have the luxury of accepting the status quo when it comes to the final judgment of humanity. We also cannot hope that maybe things will fall the right way for unbelievers. If they do not hear and believe the gospel, they will be condemned for eternity. Two weeks ago, you were encouraged to start an evangelism journal to encourage you to share your faith. This verse should affirm to you the need to diligently share the gospel and reflect upon your evangelistic encounters. If you did not start an evangelism journal two weeks ago, consider doing it now.

4. RESURRECTION AND JUDGMENT, PART 2

📖 JOHN 5:25–29

🔗: *How is the word "life" as it is used in verse 25 different from how it is used in verses 24 and 26?*

🔗: *What does it mean for the Father to have light in Himself?*

The use of the word "life" can be hard to track in these verses. God will raise the dead to life at an appointed time in the future. Not everyone, however, who is raised from the dead passes from death to life. In this sense, "life" refers to more than just physical life or self-awareness. It refers to a relationship with God gained through belief in the gospel. According to Jesus in these verses, everyone will be raised from the dead, meaning they will be self-aware

again or physically alive. But only those who believed in the Lord Jesus during their natural lives will then receive an eternal relationship with God.

Q: *How should our eternal life influence our lives now?*

Q: *How should the future resurrection influence how we treat our bodies?*


APPLICATION POINT – Jesus’s statements show that there is more to living than simply being alive. That is true of eternal life and of our lives now. As believers, our lives now should be lived in light of the life to come. Our culture is consumed with entertainment. Entertainment is not necessarily a negative thing, but much of our entertainment today has little impact on our lives beyond the time we spend being entertained. Given our obsession with it, entertainment becomes problematic because it leaves little time for personal and spiritual growth. Make a list of your usual activities during your leisure time. How much time do you spend on things that could be considered pure entertainment? How much time do you spend on personal and spiritual growth? If there is a significant imbalance toward entertainment, consider taking steps to emphasize activities that will have a greater impact on eternity. Read a book on theology or one that addresses our culture from a Christian world view. Write a poem or a song. Even playing a game with your children could influence their lives and their faith.

NEXT STEPS

Jesus was asked to authenticate His ministry. Are you able to authenticate your faith in Jesus? Your authentication should be in both word and deed. Write out your understanding of the gospel. Write out any other core commitments you have as a Christian as well as some key ways in which these beliefs have changed your life. If someone were to ask you to prove you were a Christian, you should be able to authenticate your claims.

PRAY

+Use these prayer points to instill the lessons you learned from God’s Word this week.



Lord Jesus, thank you for convicting me of sin and verifying your ministry in my life.

Father, help me to live in light of the resurrection, judgment, and eternal life.

Father, make me instrumental in someone else hearing Jesus's message and believing in His work on our behalf.

Father, help me to focus on things that will have an eternal impact on my life and the lives of others.

