

***“The Man Equal with God”***

September 1, 2013

Text: John 5:16-18

**I want to read you something, & I'd like you to guess where it comes from=>**

“What do we mean when we say He [Jesus] is the Savior of the world? The Redeemer? Each of these titles point to the truth that Jesus Christ is the only way by which we can return to live with our Heavenly Father. Jesus suffered and was crucified for the sins of the world, giving each of God's children the gift of repentance and forgiveness. Only by His mercy and grace can anyone be saved.”

This was copied verbatim from the official website of the  
Mormon Church.

Sometimes it's not what such a cult says, but what it doesn't say, that's most telling.

In this case, they don't say/reveal their view of Jesus' nature, because it's a heretical view, which is typical of cults.

But you can always identify a cult by its unbiblical view of Christ.

While the Bible reveals that Jesus is an eternal/uncreated Being, the Mormon Church teaches that He had a beginning; That His Heavenly Father, & Heavenly Mother, live on another planet producing numerous spirit children, all of whom are waiting to receive physical bodies through human procreation.

Jesus was simply the firstborn spirit child of Elohim and one of his many wives.

Lucifer (who became the devil) is another of Elohim's spirit children, & is thus Jesus' brother—as are we.

**Another cult, Jehovah's Witnesses, also teaches that Jesus was created in heaven, as God's 1<sup>st</sup> creation.**

That He is a created being, who had a beginning.

I.e. they, like the Mormons, declare X not to be an eternal Being like God.

They believe that after being created, He in turn created everything else.

But Jehovah's witnesses also believe that He is not part of the Trinity, but that He doubles as the archangel Michael.

**Such ideas about Jesus X reflect the unbelief of those who teach them, but not the truth of God's Word.**

They illustrate the fact that one of the first Xn doctrines Satan will always attack is the doctrine of Christology—the true biblical doctrine of Jesus X's nature/identity.

Satanic false doctrines about Jesus will often come close enough to the truth to sound convincing and to confuse people, but are just different enough to cause them to believe in a false X, who doesn't/cannot save anyone.

**In Matt 16, Jesus asked His disciples=> “*Who do you say that I am?*” (16:15).**

That was the most important lesson they needed to learn from all the time they had spent with Him.

When Peter answered for the whole group, *“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God,”* Jesus said to him=> *“Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven”* (17).

Jesus was a man who looked/sounded just like all the rest of us.

Unless God the Father had revealed Him to be God, the Son of God, man would prob. never have drawn that conclusion on his own.

**Even w/ God’s revelation about His Son available in the Bible, so-called theological experts still deny that He is God in a man’s body, as the Bible reveals Him to be.**

\* E.g. the religious experts of Jesus’ own time declared Him to be an insane/demonized Samaritan who had been born out of wedlock (Jn 7:20; 8:41-44; 10:20).

\* Liberal theologians of the 18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> cent. said Jesus was just a teacher of good moral values, in whom the spark of divinity burned more brightly than in most other people.  
But that He definitely was not God.

\* 20<sup>th</sup> cent. existentialists like Rudolph Bultmann, said that people can be saved by believing in X, even though the Gospels are not a historically accurate portrayal of His life.  
That they are the Gospel writers’ embellishment on a merely human “historical Jesus,” who was just a man—not God.

\* Swiss pastor Karl Barth reacted against Bultmann’s dismissal of the Gospels’ statements about Jesus, but then he too

refused to accept the biblical record as totally accurate/inerrant/infallible.

So he said his faith was not so much in the written Word of God, but in the living Word of God—Christ Himself. But how can we know anything about Jesus if not through the written record of the Word.

That meant the Jesus about whom he taught was one he experienced subjectively/mystically while reading things about Him in the Bible, which actually might/might-not be true.

**These various deviant views of Jesus' nature/character are in direct opposition to X's own testimony about Himself.**

He claimed to have come from heaven—

eternal/uncreated/pre-existent.

\* Jn 8 (Jesus)=> *“You are from below, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world”* (8:23).

\* Jn 16=> *“I came forth from the Father and have come into the world; I am leaving the world again and going to the Father”* (16:28).

\* In Jn 6, when X claimed to have been sent by the Father, those who couldn't handle that, abandoned Him, ceasing to be His disciples.

Jesus said to them=> *“Does this cause you to stumble? / What then if you see the Son of Man ascending to where He was before?”* (6:61-62).

\* Just before He died Jesus prayed=> *“Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was”* (17:5).

Jesus was with the Father in eternity past, before the world was, & before anything was created.

Beyond all this, Jesus claimed that He was one w/ the Father, which meant He claimed that He Himself was God.

\* Jn 10:30 (Jesus)=> *“I and the Father are one.”*

\* 12:45=> *“He who sees Me sees the One who sent Me.”*

\* 14:9=> *“He who has seen Me has seen the Father.”*

\* In Jn 8, X said that Abraham had rejoiced to see His day.

When the Jewish leaders pointed out that Jesus wasn't old enough for Abraham to have ever seen Him, Jesus said=> *“Before Abraham was born I am”* (8:56-58).

X was taking on Himself God's own name—*“I am.”*

He was also claiming to be timeless/eternal, God.

Just before that, Jesus had said that, as God, He had the power to save from sin the souls of those who believe in Him (8:24);

\* The power to answer prayers prayed to Him (14:13-14).

\* The power/authority to forgive sins (Mk 2:10).

And most importantly, in the context of John 5, the power/authority to determine what was/was-not acceptable regarding the observance of the Sabbath.

**The question of acceptable Sabbath behavior was where this whole subject of Jesus' nature/identity had begun.**

He had healed a man on the Sabbath, & the Jews had objected to His doing so.

This became the trigger that set the Jewish leaders on a course of hostility/opposition against Jesus, about which He later asked=>

*“Are you angry with Me because I made an entire man well on the Sabbath?” (7:23).*

In our own text, Jesus cut to the chase and addressed the issue that was the real cause of the Jewish leaders’ hostility/hatred toward Him=> His behaving as if He were God.

He will defend Himself by declaring that He is equal w/ God, & the clear implication will be, that He is God.

The result will be one of the most profound lessons in the whole Bible, on the true nature/identity of Jesus X, as God, the Son of God.

And this is the truth that cults will always deny/reject.

**Our text is a 3-part interaction between Jesus/Jewish-leaders:**

- \* Part 1—The Jews’ Persecution
- \* Part 2—Jesus’ Proclamation
- \* Part 3—The Jews’ Provocation

\* **Part 1—The Jews’ Persecution**

**[John 5:16]=>** *“For this reason the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because He was doing these things on the Sabbath.”*

**“For this reason” refers back to the verse before this (5:15)=>**

*“The man [the invalid of 38 years whom Jesus had healed] went away, and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well [on the Sabbath].”*

It was for this reason that the Jews were persecuting X.

But the verbs throughout this verse are imperfect, indicating that this sort of thing was an on-going occurrence=>

\* Jesus kept healing sick people on the Sabbath,

\* The Jewish religious leaders kept persecuting Him for it.

A continuing hostility/antagonism had developed among them towards Jesus because He kept breaking their rabbinical interpretations of the Sabbath Law.

He kept violating the manmade traditions of the elders.

**Jesus hadn't stumbled into this opposition, He had rushed into it and even orchestrated it.**

The main thing the religious leaders of Israel needed to

learn/understand/acknowledge was that their Messiah,

the Son of God, had arrived on earth—& Jesus was He.

He wasn't going to quietly go away, to avoid this conflict.

Nor would He pretend to be someone other than who He

was/is—man's Savior, & almighty God, in a human body.

The Jewish leaders' souls were so important to Jesus, that if the

Sabbath was the ground they chose for evaluating His

claims, that's where He would meet them.

\* If they would believe in Him, for who He was, & who

His miracles were proving Him to be, they'd be saved.

\* If they rejected Him, their souls would be eternally at risk.

**Jesus is still confronting people with these truths today.**

He has sent preachers w/ His Word to announce them.

Our job is to tell people who He is=> God almighty, having come to earth as a man, to save men/women from their sinfulness.

He is the One whom God has sent to earth to die for the atonement of believers' sins.

And now He appeals to them, asking for their hearts.

He is the One whom angels worship, He is the Father's joy, and He is the hope of men/women—Jesus of Nazareth—the King of the Jews, & God of very God.

**But just as in Jesus' own day, people today still refuse to receive Him, still reject Him, & seek to persecute His Church.**

It makes no sense to us, because there is so much peace/hope/joy to be had in a relationship w/ Jesus—even eternal life.

But they reject Him nonetheless.

We want to get right up in their face, & ask, “Are you actually refusing to be saved through faith in the crucified Jesus?”

“Knowing what it cost God to provide for salvation, are you actually going to tempt His patience, throwing that priceless gift away, out of indifference?”

“Don't you know you will have to stand before Him someday & answer for your rejection of His mercy?”

**Some people reject X, w/ little/no thought at all.**

They ignore what God's Word says about Him because they consider it all a worthless myth.

X has died, & His nail-pierced hands have opened up the door to God's Kingdom, but they're too disinterested even to look into it.

**Others, like the Jewish leaders of Jerusalem, have given thought to Jesus' claims to be God, & to save souls.**

But they say they just can't see it, which really means they won't have it, because they don't like the idea of salvation as a gift of God's grace.

They don't want to be saved by someone else's atoning sacrifice for their sin—it's too humbling/humiliating.

But if they would, by the power of the H.S., their faith in the redeeming mercy of X, who suffered in our place & bore our sins, would bring peace/joy to their hearts too, such as they could never even have guessed was possible.

There is no question, but what Jesus would do that for them, no matter how they have sinned against Him in the past. He who graciously healed the undeserving sinner at the pool of Bethesda, stands ready to heal the soul of anyone who is willing to ask Him, in faith, to do so. There is no question of His willingness—only of ours.

But if, like the Jewish leaders, we are determined to reject the Lord, hate Him for His kindness, and persecute Him for doing good, we're free to indulge in such suicidal insanity. If that's you, my response to you is the same as it would have been to those Jewish leaders who rejected/persecuted X=> What a shame! What a tragic waste! How sad I feel for you!

**\* Part 2—Jesus' Proclamation**

**This was Jesus' response to the Jews who persecuted Him=>**

[Verse 17]=> *“But He answered them, ‘My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working.’”*

**The reason the Jewish leadership was persecuting X for violating the Sabbath was that, in their view, He had performed work by healing the bedridden man.**

Jesus answered their accusation by saying in essence, “True, I was working. So what! My Father was working too. We are both always working.”

This means, we must review our definitions of work/rest, both of which must be rooted in God's resting on the 7<sup>th</sup> day, after He had created the universe.

**Spiritual rest must be defined as creation submitting & conforming to God's will, as His purposes are completed/perfected w/i them.**

E.g. at the end of Gen 1 we read, *“God saw all that He had made, & behold, it was very good [according to God's will]. And there was evening and there was morning, the*

*sixth day.”*

God’s will had been fully accomplished w/i His creation,  
and so He pronounced it all good as He enjoyed  
beholding what He had created.

Then the very next verse adds=> *“Thus the heavens and  
the earth were completed, and all their hosts. / By the  
seventh day God completed His **work** which He had  
done, and He **rested** on the seventh day from all His  
**work** which He had done. [He stopped creating  
because His plan was complete & He could now stop  
& enjoy it]. / Then God blessed the 7<sup>th</sup> day &  
sanctified it, because in it He **rested** from all His  
work which God had created and made”*  
(Gen 1:31-2:3).

Does this mean God became inactive w/i His creation?

Is that what His “rest” meant?

No because all His creatures’ existence had to be sustained,  
and He had to do it.

But He stopped/creating and considered/enjoyed it all—and  
that was His “rest.”

Someone=> Are you sure *“He rested”* doesn’t mean He  
recuperated from the fatigue of creating the entire universe?

No, Isa 40:28=> *“The everlasting God, the Lord, Creator  
of the ends of the earth, **does not become weary or  
tired.**”*

So His “resting” wasn’t for the purpose of regaining  
strength, as it would be for us.

Jesus had also participated in creation, & He too sustained it.

Col 1:16 says of Jesus=> *“By **Him** all things were **created**,*

*both in the heavens and on earth.”*

Then verse 17 adds=> *“In Him all things **hold together.**”*

So even though both the Father/Son had to sustain all of creation, holding it all together, they both rested as They did so, in the knowledge that God had completed/achieved His creative will/purpose/plan, and could now behold/enjoy it, w/o continuing to create.

God keeps the sun/moon continually rising/setting, rain falling, rivers running, the flora/fauna reproducing themselves, & He rests/rejoices even as He actively sustains and controls it all.

**The same is true on a spiritual level when God completes and accomplishes His redemptive purposes in the heart of man.**

His purpose/will are completed, and He “rests” by beholding/enjoying it.

But in this case, the person himself enters into God’s rest as well.

Heb 4:1=> *“Let us fear if, while a promise remains of **entering His rest**, any one of you may seem to have come short of it.”*

We enter God’s own rest as we give up any notion of earning our salvation, believe in X, become born again according to His will, & rejoice in His eternal life.

I.e., as we stop resisting His will about how to  
become saved, relax, and surrender to Him.

Heb 4:3=> *“We who have **believed** enter that **rest**.”*

When we come into conformity w/ God’s will for our lives,  
we too enter into (& participate in) His joyous rest.

**How does all this apply to Jesus’ answer to the Jews’ charge  
that by healing people, He was working, thus violating  
the Sabbath?**

Jesus’ answer to them was that “work”/“rest” /“Sabbath” mean  
what He says they mean, not what some council of rabbis  
has defined them to mean.

As Jesus says in Mt 12:8, He is the Lord of the Sabbath.

They aren’t.

Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath, because He is the Lord, God.

That is an absolute truth the Jewish religious leaders  
needed to accept, submit to, and embrace by faith.

**But there’s also another factor involved here, in determining  
what is lawful & what’s unlawful to do, on a Sabbath.**

Being Lord of the Sabbath, God (both the Father/Son) have the  
right to lift the Sabbath law at will & to make exceptions to  
it, knowing they fall w/I His will.

Thus, in John 7, Jesus pointed out=> *“Moses has given you  
circumcision (not because it is from Moses, but from the  
fathers), and on the Sabbath you circumcise a man. / If a  
man receives circumcision on the Sabbath so that the Law  
of Moses will not be broken, are you angry w/ Me because I*

*made an entire man well on the Sabbath?” (7:22-23).*

God, the Lord of the Sabbath, declares that the Sabbath should be subservient to good works of mercy and necessity (such as circumcision), in keeping with the divine principles of His Kingdom, & His perfect will.

E.g. Jesus said (Mt 12)=> *“What man is there among you who has a sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will he not take hold of it and lift it out?”*

Implication=> Jesus condoned such an act of mercy, performed on the Sabbath, as being lawful/acceptable.

Vs 12=> *“How much more valuable then is a man than a sheep! So then, it is **lawful to do good on the Sabbath**” (Mt 12:11-12).*

Such works as these are part of both God’s/the-believer’s rest.

Being in conformity w/ God’s will/purpose brings rest/refreshment to the believer’s spirit.

**God’s will is greater & more sacrosanct, than anything else—including the Sabbath.**

Man wants to rest in his own understanding of foolproof rules/principles/laws.

God wants us to learn to rest in His will, not rules/formulas.

When Jesus told the bedridden man to stand, fold up his bed and walk, He was revealing God’s will to him, which overrode the normal rules of the Sabbath.

All these truths, taken together, formed Jesus' **proclamation**,  
regarding what was acceptable conduct on the Sabbath.

**But the crux of Jesus' proclamation was the identity which  
exists between God the Father, and God the Son.**

When the Father works, the Son works.

When the Son works, the Father works.

The Father/Son are always engaged in the same task, as the  
Son is always going about His Father's business.

Jesus was claiming a unique relationship w/ the Father, as His  
only-begotten Son, the radiance of His glory, and the  
exact representation of the Father's nature.

X was also claiming full deity/equality w/ God the Father.

He was saying that He & the Father are 1 in essence, in  
dignity/honor, in power/authority.

**As we see in verse 18, the Jewish leaders didn't take well to  
Jesus' proclamation.**

**\* Part 3—The Jews' Provocation**

Jesus' proclamation provoked them even more than before.

[Verse 18]=> *“For this reason therefore the Jews were seeking  
all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking  
the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father,  
making Himself equal with God.”*

**The Jews had a proper understanding of the infinite  
separation between God's deity & our humanity.**

That His thoughts are higher than our thoughts, and His  
ways are higher than our ways (Isa 55:9).

They understood that for any creature to claim equality with his Creator, is not only ridiculous, it's blasphemous.

Those in Scripture who have made such claims are shown to be a rogues' gallery of spiritual monsters=> Pharaoh (Ezek 29:3), Nebuchadnezzar (Isa 14), and Hiram (Ezek 28:9) who said "*I am a god,*" and the Lord answered him=> "*You are a man, & not God.*"

In each of these cases, their thoughts had become identical w/ the thoughts of Satan, the original usurper of God's rights/honor.

E.g. in Isa 14, God's words are addressed both to Nebuchadnezzar & to Satan (w/ whom he identifies)=>

*"How you have fallen from heaven, O star of the morning, son of the dawn! You have been cut down to the earth, You who have weakened the nations! / But you said in your heart, 'I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God, & I will sit on the mount of assembly In the recesses of the north. / I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High'"* (Isa 14:12-14).

**The Jews of Jesus' time felt provoked and reacted harshly to what they thought was just another mere man claiming to be God.**

But Jesus' miracles (such as healing the man who was bedridden for 38 years) were intended to prove He was indeed God.

This whole Gospel documents Jesus' miracles for that very purpose.

Our whole salvation hinges on our believing that He is  
God.

So in Jn 20:30 we read=> *“Many other **signs** Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; / but these have been written so that **you may believe** that Jesus is the Christ, the **Son of God**; and that **believing** you may **have life** in His name.”*

Jesus had the power to abrogate the Sabbath Law, because He was God, the Son of God.

He suspended that Law, to force the Jews to deal w/ this truth.

He called God *“His own Father”* to confront them w/ the fact that His Sonship was infinitely superior to theirs.

And that again added to their provocation.

Any religion which fails to confess Jesus X to be uncreated, eternal, and absolutely equal w/ God the Father, is a cult.

When they come to your door, ask them, “Do you confess Jesus to be uncreated/eternal/equal w/ God?”

If they don’t answer “Yes,” turn them away.

**Most importantly for us, because Jesus is God incarnate, He deserves our worship as God, & our obedience as Lord.**

He is the only One who can save your soul from sin/death/hell.

And He is the One who deserves your heartfelt worship.

\* Heb 1:6 says the angels worship Him.

\* Mt 14:33 says His disciples worshiped Him, saying=>

*“You are certainly God’s Son!”*

\* Phil 2:10 says that someday every knee will bow before Him & every tongue will confess that “*Jesus Christ is Lord*” (2:10-11).

## ***“The Man Equal with God”***

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Text: John 5:16-18

1. One of the first Christian doctrines Satan will always attack is the doctrine of Christology—the true biblical doctrine of Jesus Christ’s [14 nature] and identity.

Matt 16:15, 17; Jn 7:20; 8:41-44; 10:20

2. Deviant views of Jesus’ nature and character are in direct opposition to Christ’s own testimony about [16 Himself].

Jn 8:23; 16:28; 6:61-62; 17:5

3. Jesus claimed that He was one with the Father, which meant He claimed that He Himself was [8 God].

Jn 10:30; 12:45; 14:9; 8:56-58; 8:24:14:13-14; Mk 2:10

4. The question of acceptable Sabbath behavior was where this whole subject of [14 Jesus’] nature and identity had begun.

Jn 7:23

### **Our text is a three-part interaction between Jesus and the Jewish leaders...**

#### **\* Part 1—The Jews’ Persecution**

**[John 5:16]**

Jn 5:15

5. A continuing hostility and antagonism had developed among the Jewish religious leaders towards Jesus because He kept breaking their rabbinical interpretations of the [16 Sabbath] Law.
6. Just as in Jesus’ own day, people still refuse to receive Him, still [14 reject] Him, and seek to persecute His Church.
7. He who graciously healed the undeserving sinner at the pool of Bethesda stands ready to heal the [10 soul] of anyone who is willing to ask Him in faith to do so.

#### **\* Part 2—Jesus’ Proclamation**

**[Verse 17]**

8. Spiritual rest must be defined as creatures submitting to God's will as His [18 purposes] are completed and perfected within them.

Gen 1:31-33; Isa 40:28; Col 1:16-17

9. The same is true on a spiritual level when God accomplishes His redemptive purposes in the heart of man; but in this case the person himself enters into God's [10 rest] as well.

Heb 4:1, 3; Mt 12:8

10. Being Lord of the Sabbath, God (both the Father and the Son) have the right to lift the Sabbath law at will and make [24 exceptions] to it.

Jn 7:22-23; Matt 12:11-12

11. The crux of Jesus' proclamation was the [18 identity] which exists between God the Father and God the Son.

**\* Part 3—The Jews' Provocation**

**[Verse 18]**

12. The Jews had a proper understanding of the infinite separation between God's deity and [8 our] humanity.

Ezek 29:3; 28:9; Isa 14:12-14

13. The Jews of Jesus' time felt provoked and reacted harshly to what they thought was another mere man claiming to be God; but Jesus' miracles were intended to prove He was [14 indeed] God.

Jn 20:30

14. Jesus deserves your heartfelt worship; someday every knee will bow before Him and confess that Jesus Christ is [10 Lord].

Heb 1:6; Mt 14:33; Phil 2:10-11