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The Voice of Christ John 5:25-29

Christians have been given a mission. We are to go and make disciples, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that Christ has commanded us. This is our mission.

Are we pursuing that mission? Are we doing what we can to reach the lost? Are we doing what we can to build up the saints? I know that there are differences in gifts, abilities, personalities, and opportunities but this should not mean that any professed disciple should feel the luxury of thinking that they have no responsibility when it comes to pursuing the fulfillment of the mission that Christ has given to His church. This mission needs to be continually on our minds and in our prayers.

You might say, "Dale, why do you keep coming back to this?" I keep coming back to this because the passage that we have been studying continues to communicate to us how faithful Christ was in pursuing His mission. I don't understand, in light of Christ's example, how we as professed disciples could be satisfied with anything less than being as faithful in the pursuit of our mission as He was faithful in the pursuit of His.

But even more important than Christ's example in our faithful pursuit of the mission, He has given us is His promise. Let me read for you **John 15:16** when Christ told His disciples "**You did not choose Me, but I chose you, and appointed you, that you should go and bear fruit.**" Christ has appointed us to go and bear fruit. The going and bearing fruit is therefore a certainty. This is why when we see the example of Christ we will respond to the example and will therefore seek to fulfill our mission

Therefore, not only because of Christ's example but also more importantly because of Christ's promise, we should expect that true born again Christians would be characterized by a sincere desire to fulfill their mission.

This brings us back in our study of the Bethesda controversy in **John 5**. In **John 5:1-9** the apostle details how Christ healed a paralytic on the Sabbath. We called this section "The alleged crime." In **John 5:10-15** we see a group of certain religious Jews confronting this man who had been healed. We called this section "the initial investigation." In **John 5:16-18** we see a very brief interaction between Jesus and these certain religious Jews, which led them to accuse Christ of a second crime. What was the crime? They accused Him of making Himself equal with God. We called this section "the decision to prosecute."

After the Jews had made this second charge against Christ and were even more eager to kill Him, Jesus did not retreat. Jesus did not in any way seek to deflect their hostility. Rather He continued His march toward the Cross of Calvary. He continued to pursue His mission in **John 5:19-47**. We have called this fairly large section of Scripture "Christ's defense."

He begins this rather extended defense with an explanation. He explains to these religious Jews the nature of the charge that they had brought against Him. Why would He need to explain the nature of the charge that they had brought against Him? Though they had correctly accused Him of having

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made Himself equal with God they really did not understand the nature of that equality. Jesus therefore felt it necessary to describe for these religious Jews the relationship that He enjoyed with His Father in **John 5:19-24**.

In describing the relationship that He enjoyed with His Father, He delved into truths related to the doctrine of the Trinity. What is the doctrine of the Trinity? The doctrine of the Trinity is the belief that though there is only One God, He subsists in three unique and separate Persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. How did Christ's description of His relationship with His Father delve into this very wondrous but difficult doctrine of the Trinity?

First of all He described for them how He and His Father, though two separate and unique Persons, enjoy the same essence in **John 5:19**. Secondly, He described for them how He and His Father, though two separate and unique persons, do exactly the same works in **John 5:20-22**. Finally, He described for them how He and His Father, though two separate and unique Persons, deserve the same identical honor in **John 5:23**. Jesus is therefore in these verses telling these Jews in very clear terms that when they see Him they are seeing God, not a different or competing God but they are seeing God the Son, the second person of the Trinity.

Of course it would not be difficult for us to imagine at this point how much more enraged these Jews must have been getting. They, I am sure, are getting hotter and hotter. But Jesus continues to press forward and in pressing forward, I believe, He is continuing to make a conscious choice to press forward in His mission. And in this decision to continue to press forward in His mission He makes a very hard-hitting summary statement in **John 5:24**. He introduces this statement with the words, "**Truly, truly, I say to you.**" In other words He is saying to them, "Listen to me very carefully." And what did He go on to say? "**He who hears My word, AND BELIEVES HIM WHO SENT ME, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.**" The phrase, "**and believes Him who sent me**" is a key phrase.

Based on what He had said in **John 5:19-23** Christ is now in essence saying to these religious Jews that, "If you would receive what I have said about My personal equality with the Father then you have received what My Father is saying about that equality. There is no difference. Therefore, to hear the Son and to believe the Son is to hear the Father and to believe the Father." Jesus has brought some very difficult theology down to a very practical level. He has brought the very difficult theology of **John 5:19-23** down to a level of life and death.

How does Christ finish His statement in **John 5:24**? "**He who hears My word and BELIEVES HIM WHO SENT ME HAS ETERNAL LIFE, AND DOES NOT COME INTO JUDGMENT, BUT HAS PASSED OUT OF DEATH INTO LIFE.**"

The Jews had accused Jesus of making Himself equal with God. Though they were correct they did not fully understand the significance of those words. Jesus, in **John 5:19-24**, with no regard for Himself began His rather lengthy defense by first of all seeking to clarify the charge against Him. He seeks to do this by describing His relationship with His Father. Did this diminish the hostility the Jews toward Him? Absolutely not! But He did what He did because it moved Him one step closer to the cross. It moved Him one step closer to fulfilling His mission.

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Will He now stop digging a deeper and deeper hole for Himself? No! He doesn't. We are now ready to move on in our study of John 5. We are now ready to consider **John 5:25-29**.

Let me read for you **John 5:25-29**. **"Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear shall live. (26) For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself; (27) and He gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man. (28) Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs shall hear His voice, (29) and shall come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment."**

This section of Scripture might seem somewhat familiar. It might seem somewhat familiar because it repeats certain thoughts that were introduced to us in **John 5:19-24**. In fact, many people might think that because Christ is repeating certain thoughts that appeared earlier in **John 5:19-24** that **John 5:25-29** should NOT be considered a separate section. I can understand this. Christ is certainly once again describing His relationship with His Father and describing that relationship in terms He introduced to us earlier in **John 5:19-24**, but even so it seems that we need to consider this as a separate section.

How does **John 5:25** begin? It begins with these words, **"Truly, truly, I say to you."** These words, **"Truly, truly, I say to you"** clearly mark off what Jesus is about to say from what He has just said.

Therefore, though I know that **John 5:19-24** is clearly linked with **John 5:25-29**, I have chosen for the purpose of our message this weekend to examine **John 5:25-29** as a single section of Scripture.

We are now ready to examine this very important passage of Scripture. We are now ready to examine this further description of Christ's relationship with His Father. And we will break this passage down into two parts with each part referencing "the voice of Christ."

I would hope that as we look at these two different references to the voice of Christ that we will once again be challenged to pursue the mission that Christ has given us with the same intensity that He pursued His mission.

The first reference to the voice of Christ can be found in John 5:25-27. Let me read for you these three verses. **"Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming and now is, when the dead shall hear THE VOICE of the Son of God; and those who hear shall live. (26) For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself; (27) and He gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man."**

Let us begin by reading **John 5:25**. **"Truly, truly I say to you, an hour is coming and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear shall live."** John 5:25 speaks about Christ giving life to the dead. But what exactly is Jesus referring to? Is Jesus referring to Christ giving life to those who are spiritually dead or to those who are physically dead? Let us try and answer this question.

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Notice the phrase "**an hour is coming and now is.**" This is a very intriguing phrase. "An hour is coming" based on John 5:28-29 certainly points to a future physical resurrection but the phrase "and now is" points to a *present* dimension of that future reality.

But how can there be a dimension of that future physical resurrection in the present? The present dimension of a future physical resurrection is experienced when Christ gives life to those who are spiritually dead (Ephesians 2:4-6). When Christ gives life to those who are spiritually dead they in a very real sense experience resurrection, a spiritual resurrection.

Let me read for you **Ephesians 2:4-6 "But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ ... and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus."** This is a description of the spiritual resurrection. This spiritual resurrection of course is a precursor to our future physical resurrection. And because it is a precursor to our future physical resurrection we certainly can say that even though our physical resurrection is in the future a present dimension of it is present even now. And of course we see this I believe highlighted when Jesus said in **John 5:25, "Truly, truly I say to you, an hour is coming and now is."**

So how does God accomplish this spiritual resurrection? Obviously we have to be joined to the life of Christ as we see in **Ephesians 2** but before we can be joined to the life of Christ we must first of all hear the voice of Christ or in other words the voice of "the Son of God" according to **John 5:25**. Let us continue to read the verse. "**Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear shall live.**"

Spiritual resurrection begins with hearing the Son of God or in other words the voice of Christ. Not an audible voice that can be heard with human ears but rather an inaudible voice that speaks to our hearts through the Word of God. Those who hear and respond to the voice of Christ as He speaks to them through the Word of God shall live, not maybe or might but shall live.

I heard His voice over 40 years ago when I heard the gospel for the very first time. When someone shared with me from the Scriptures that I was a sinner and could not save myself I heard the voice of Christ. When that same person shared with from the Scriptures that though I was a sinner and could not save myself, that Jesus on the basis of His death, burial, and resurrection could; I heard the voice of Christ. And when that same person, based on the Scriptures, invited me to come to Christ I heard the voice of Christ speaking to my heart and putting my faith in Him I became spiritually alive. I experienced a spiritual resurrection.

When Christ speaks about giving life in John 5:25 He is primarily but not exclusively talking about *spiritual* life.

But how could Christ do this for us? Where did Christ get the authority to give life to those who hear His voice? Let us go to **John 5:26. "For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself."**

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What did Jesus mean when He said that the Father has life in Himself? When Jesus said that the Father has life in Himself He meant that His Father has always been and always will be the source of all that is alive both physically and spiritually. This certainly is not hard to appreciate.

If this is so then how could He have given "life in Himself" to Christ? God the Father gave to His Son "life in Himself" in the beginning. This means that Christ like His Father has always been and always will be the source of all that is alive (John 1:1-4). This is not a new thought in the Gospel of John. Let me read for you **John 1:1-4. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (2) He was in the beginning with God. (3) All things came into being by Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. (4) In Him was LIFE, and the life was the light of men."**

Why can Christ, as the Son of God, give life to those who are spiritually dead when they hear His voice? Christ can give those who hear His voice spiritual life because like His Father He has life in Himself. Or, in other words, He has always been the source of all that is alive both physically and spiritually.

But Jesus is not satisfied with simply speaking about what happens to those who hear His words or in other words who hear the words of His Father. He goes on to tell us what happens to those who do not choose to hear His words or in other words who do not choose to hear the words of His Father. Let us now read **John 5:27. "And He gave Him authority to execute judgment."**

Jesus once again reiterates what He had said earlier in **John 5:22.** And what did **John 5:22** say? **"For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son."**

When it says that the Father has given all judgment to the Son it is referring to the final judgment. No one but Christ will decide the eternal destiny of those who come before Him (John 5:27). This of course, as I have mentioned before, would have been a shocking comment. This would have meant that Christ once again is claiming for Himself a prerogative that belonged only to God according to **Genesis 18:25.**

But why would God the Father do this? Why would He entrust all judgment or in other words the final judgment of the human race into the hands of His Son. Let us continue to read the verse. **"For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son, because He is the Son of Man."**

What is the significance of this phrase "Son of Man?" Son of Man is Christ's racial name, as the representative Man, in the sense of 1 Corinthians 15:45-47 as Son of David is His distinctively Jewish name. God the Father has entrusted the final judgment into the hands of His Son because He, as the Son of Man, is the representative man. He represents all of mankind, both Jew and Gentile. Therefore there is no better person to sit in judgment over the whole of the human race at the final judgment than Jesus who is not only the Son of God but who is also the Son of Man, the representative man.

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When was the voice of Christ first referred to in Christ's continuing description of His relationship with His Father? The first reference to the voice of Christ in His continuing description of His relationship with His Father is found in **John 5:25-27** when He primarily is seen as speaking to those who are spiritually dead. But this is not the only reference to the voice of Christ. There is a second reference.

The second reference to the voice of Christ can be found in John 5:28-29. Let us first of all look at **John 5:28**. He begins by saying, "**Do not marvel at this.**" Marvel at what? Marvel at the fact that God has entrusted all judgment to His Son. That is what they should not marvel at. It is a fact and they need to embrace it as a fact.

Why? Because Jesus goes on to say, "**For an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs shall hear His voice.**" Notice that it does not say, "**An hour is coming and now is.**" The voice of Christ is not being heard in this verse in some fashion in the present. It is not referring to the voice of Christ calling people to spiritual life and to spiritual resurrection in the present but rather this voice is a voice that will be heard in the future. The reference to the voice of Christ in John 5:25-27 results in people being spiritually resurrected and the voice of Christ in John 5:28-29 results in people being *physically* resurrected.

Let us continue to read **John 5:28**. "**For an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs shall hear His voice.**" This is a reference to the final judgment that we read about in **Revelation 20:11-15**. And what will this judgment be based on? Let us now add **verse 29** to **verse 28**. "**For an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs shall hear His voice, (29) and shall come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment.**"

Someone might say, "I thought we saved were by faith." This is absolutely true. We are saved by faith. But the only way we can know whether or not saving faith is actually present is if deeds consistent with that faith can be seen in our lives.

Therefore, the judgment that follows this future and final resurrection is based on *deeds*. It is based on deeds because our deeds bear witness to our faith or lack of faith in Christ.

CONCLUSION

These religious Jews had accused Jesus of violating the Sabbath. His initial defense to this charge led them to correctly accuse Him that He had made Himself equal with God. In His desire to not leave them confused about the true meaning of the charge they had brought against Him He chose to describe His relationship with His Father. In doing this He delved into truths related to the trinity. And as He plumbed the depths of this glorious but very difficult doctrine I am sure that they would have become angrier and angrier. And as they were seething with anger He told them how if they would hear what He was telling them they would pass from death to life in John 4:24.

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He reiterates this again in John 4:25-27 when He speaks about people hearing the voice of Christ not audibly but inaudibly through the Word of God and being spiritually resurrected. Then He concludes this section with another reference to the voice of Christ. Heard not in the here and now but rather at the time of the final judgment when He calls all those who are dead out of their tombs either to a resurrection of life or to a resurrection of damnation. This judgment will not be based on what someone says but rather on they have done.

Will Christ, by the way we are living our *mission*, call us forth to a resurrection of life or will He call us forth to a resurrection of judgment?