

The Wednesday Word, June 17, 2009: So Jesus Never Claimed to Be God: Part 2

Last week we examined the first of Christ's seven claims to deity made in John 5. His healing of a man who had been crippled for 38 years occasioned these assertions. The poor man had been sick longer than Jesus had been on earth, but Jesus healed Him and, surprise, surprise, the Jewish leaders took offense. Blistering with anger because of this Sabbath day healing, they placed Jesus firmly in the crosshairs of their fury. Christ, however, the master strategist, used this occasion to declare His equality with the Father by first of all, claiming the same divine exemption for Sabbath keeping as was enjoyed by God. This was a clear declaration of His deity. (If you missed this particular W.W. please request a copy). Now for the second claim.

Claim #2:

Vs 19 "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."

At first reading this does not seem to be a claim to equality with God. In fact it seems just the opposite. However, this verse is no admission of inferiority to the Father! When we read this verse along with verse 30 we get further insight into what Jesus is saying for He says, "I can of mine own self do nothing: -----because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me.

When Jesus says, "The Son can do nothing of himself." He is saying, "The Son cannot act independently of the Father." And why could He not? Because His will was absolutely one with the Father's! This is not a declaration of any lack or inferiority; rather it was a declaration of equality and oneness with the Father!

"But" says someone, "Jesus said that he could not do anything of Himself. Surely this means that he is not God?" Not at all! When God says there are things that He cannot do, does it make Him less than God? For example, God says that He cannot lie -----is this an admission of a deficiency? When He says He cannot deny Himself, is this an admission of insufficiency? Of course not! So when Jesus says He can do nothing of Himself, He is not declaring an inability, but rather declaring an absolute unity with the Father.

This of course makes perfect sense! Since He is God then His will must be exactly the same as the Father's. If not, there would be two absolute, but conflicting wills, which means that there would be, in that case, two opposing Gods. Both logic and Scripture insist, however, that there is no such thing as two supreme beings.

It was because the Lord Jesus was the Son of God that His will was totally aligned and immersed with the Father's. How beautiful the Lord Christ is in comparison to us. The bias of our will is to forge independence from God. It is only God's grace working in us that motivates us to seek God's perfect will. But Jesus' will was always that of the Father's.

This set Jesus apart! He never acted independently from the Father. He was always in perfect subjection to the Father. There was no self-will in Him which had to be broken. >From start to finish He was in total agreement with the One who sent Him. His first recorded utterance defined His purpose when He declared that He must be about his Father's business?" His ministry was characterized by words like, "My food is to do the will of him that sent me." And, in Gethsemane, as He nears the cross, in the garden, with face covered in bloody sweat we hear Him pray, "Not my will, but thine be done."

Let's then, in the light of this, look at this scripture in John 5 more closely, "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." What an extraordinary claim! In effect what Christ Jesus is saying is, "My deeds are divine deeds. I cannot do anything based on my own agenda for I have no agenda apart from the Father's. I see what My Father is doing and I do exactly the same things."

Think about it, if someone came up to you saying, "I can't do anything by myself for I am so at one with God that I have only one will and that is his will. And in fact, I can do everything God does and in just the same way as He does it!" Oh yeah? Send for the men in white coats!

But that's exactly what Jesus claimed. Now, if someone is going to do everything God does exactly the way God does it, then, of a necessity, he would have to be God. And that's who Jesus claimed to be! He did nothing of Himself; in other words He has no separate interests or will apart from the Father's. Whatever the Father did Christ did. But more than that, He not only did the same things the Father did, but also did them in exactly the same way the Father did.

If a friend made this claim to you, you'd definitely dispatch him to the funny farm. And we've got to face the same thing about Jesus. It's not enough to get sentimental about Him and say that he was a wonderful man. If He was not God, He's a fraud and anything but wonderful. If He was not God he was not good, He was indeed mad or evil!

And that's the Gospel Truth!