

The Wednesday Word, June 24, 2009: So Jesus Never Claimed to Be God: Part 3

In our previous WWs, in this series, we saw how the Lord Jesus healed a man who had been, for 38 years, lying in a hopeless condition by the pool of Bethesda. Then Jesus arrived, walked into the waiting helpless sea of humanity, singled out the man and with healing power commanded him to take up his bed and walk. But all was not well and good. These things, you remember, happened on the Sabbath and an immediate fury of religion ensued. Christ and the religious Jews were brought into direct confrontation and as an outgrowth of this confrontation, Christ laid claim to being no less than God almighty, not once, but seven times. Today we consider His third claim to deity found in this passage.

Claim #3:

John 5:21 "For as the Father raises up the dead, and quickens (gives life to) them; even so the Son quickens whom he will."

Here again, Christ claims equality with the Father. Can you imagine what this must have done to those Jewish folks who heard Him say this? Boldly He asserts, "As God raises up the dead, so do I." What a statement!

The raising of the dead and giving them life is the absolute prerogative of God. Only God has the power to give physical life. The Jewish listeners knew this. They knew that Genesis tells of how He breathed into man and the man became a living soul. They knew that in Deuteronomy 32:39, God says, "I kill and I make alive.

Notice the stunning claims of Jesus, not only does he claim to raise the dead, but He also claims to raise them as a result of His own will. Now if that isn't a claim to Deity I don't know what is! We cannot ignore His claims and call him a good teacher but not God. No good teacher makes fantastic statements like these unless they are true. Let's face it, if Christ was not God he was a scurrilous evildoer!

But of course, as they say, the proof of the pudding is in the eating! Did Christ raise the dead? Yes He did! "Ah, but" you say, "So did the prophets and the disciples." This is very true, they raised the dead, but only as instruments of God. Never once did they do it as a result of their own absolute will and power.

Here's the truth of the matter ----- God's will and the will of Christ are one and the same. God is sovereign in this matter of whom He raises from the dead and so is Christ---and there is never a conflict: they are one! This sets Christ apart from every other religious teacher. Do you know of any religious leader from any century who by his own sovereign will raised the dead? I know of none.

"Yes, but I have a problem believing all that stuff about Jesus raising the dead" says one. You do? Well rather than debate about miracles in general, I'd ask you to consider Christ's last and greatest miracle---His own resurrection!

How do you answer the evidence for that? Since Christ arose from the dead by His own power I have no problem believing that He can raise anyone He wants to from the dead! (See John 10:17-18).

Concerning Christ's power to give life to the dead Charles Alexander writes,

In these words Christ claims for Himself the ultimate mark of deity, "whom he will." To raise the dead is to be the Lord of Creation. ---The raising of the physically dead, truly is a work in which men like Elijah, Elisha, Peter and Paul have participated, but not in the sense in which Christ here speaks. They did not raise whom they would, but only those whom the sovereignty of Christ determined, Of a divine Person only could it be said, "He makes alive those whom He wills to make alive." So the Son "quickens whom He will."

Charles Alexander: Spiritual Exposition of the Gospel of John

No believer can ever put Jesus Christ on a par with Mohammed, Buddha, the Virgin Mary, Moses or any religious leader from any period of time. Apart from that, none of those people ever claimed to be God, none of them raised the dead by their own will.

As believers we must accept and hold to the truth of the deity of Christ. To believe that Jesus was merely a good teacher who gave us excellent moral standards and ethics is not enough. Jesus himself does not allow us that privilege. He unashamedly claimed to be God!

And that the Gospel Truth!