

# The Outrageous Claims of Jesus of Nazareth

by Steve Gallagher

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*This sermon delves into the confrontation between Jesus and the religious authorities, highlighting Jesus' claims of being the Son of God, his authority to judge, and his power to give life. It emphasizes the importance of truly seeking God, worshiping in spirit and truth, and living out the teachings of Jesus rather than being stuck in religious traditions or pride.*

**Scripture:** John 5:16, John 5:21, John 5:22, John 5:39, John 4:23

**Topics:** "Authority of Christ", "True Worship"

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## Description

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## Transcript

At this point in the life of Jesus of Nazareth, he was wildly popular. People were amazed at his miracles, his healings, and they were amazed at his teachings. He was a force that stormed through Palestine, but this was not lost on the religious authorities.

You know, the religious establishment started feeling a little alarmed by this young man come out of Galilee, not, you know, out of their schools or anything like that, a carpenter, a blue-collar guy. And there's this whole movement across Palestine that's sweeping the nation, but he was a threat to the status quo that these religious authorities had maintained. That status quo was what kept them in power.

That status quo was what kept the people in subjugation to the tyranny of their pride-based religion. Now, up till now, the Jewish authorities were, you know, maybe somewhat suspicious of him, unsure about him, not sure what to make of him, but something happens here in John chapter 5 that completely changes everything. From here on out, he will face the hostility and the opposition of the religious authorities for the rest of his life.

From this point on, there is a definite rupture between Jesus Christ and the governing, ruling religious authorities of Israel. And from now on, he will be challenged over every miracle and every teaching. Everywhere he goes, from the synagogues of Galilee to the temple of Jerusalem, he will be dogged, watched, impeded, reproached, questioned, tempted, insulted, and conspired against by these Jewish

leaders.

And it all begins with the healing of a lame man, a simple act of kindness. That's where it begins. Isaac Newton's third law of motion states that for every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction.

And I have found that to be the case in the spiritual realm. I have noticed down through my 30-some years of ministering that anytime the Lord, like, really moves, like, you know, in some situation that I'm involved in or whatever, I can guarantee you that there is going to be a reaction from hell. I can guarantee you it happens all the time, or I should say every time.

And that's what happens here. Because Jesus does this wonderful, kind deed to this lame man, as Pastor Ed mentioned, had been like that for 38 years. Man, 38 years.

And, you know, if you've seen The Chosen, it really brings it out, just the suffering that he went through. And so, Jesus responds, basically, to their response, I guess you could say. And, you know, this discourse, the rest of the chapter here in John, to us, it can seem like a rambling, sort of confusing, what's he saying? I don't get it.

You know, I don't know what he's saying. How many of you kind of felt that way when you read over it? Okay, the rest of you just need to work on your honesty. I mean, that's how it affected me when I first read it a week or two ago.

It's like, what? You know, but I had to really pray and look at it and dissect it and examine, you know, that's what the Word of God is here for. It's just tremendous in that way. If you'll just give it the attention it deserves.

And things started clearing up for me. The haze started going away and I started seeing what the reality was, what Jesus was saying. And it is tremendous, the things that are expressed in here.

And that's why there's a tremendous reaction from hell against it. And it should make sense to us that the Son of the living God, who has been living in eternity in heaven with the Father, that when he comes down to earth in a man's body and starts expressing things, wouldn't it make sense that there would be some things that would be enigmatic to us and mysterious and hard to grasp? I mean, the reality is when you start reading this chapter, here's what it is. It's not that he's confusing.

It's not that he's rambling around. It's that the human mind can't keep up with the depth of it, the profundity of it. Problem is not on Jesus.

The problem is on us because we are pretty much spiritually out of it. All right, so let's read here. Start off, you know, obviously I can't read everything, but I'm going to pick my way through here and I'm going to pull some things out of here for you to look at.

Verse 16, for this reason, the Jews were persecuting Jesus because he was doing these things on the Sabbath. But he answered them, my father is working until now and I myself am working. 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 and making himself equal with God.

All right, so that's the crux of their complaints against Jesus here. But Jesus uses this as an opportunity to speak something into the nation of Israel that was earth shattering. Man, Pastor Steve, how did you get all

that out of that? I didn't even understand what he's talking about.

You're saying it's earth shattering? Yeah, and I think you'll feel that way here in a few minutes too. But from their perspective, the Jewish leaders who are listening to this, from their perspective, the things that he is about to say were absolutely outrageous. All right, so here's some claims that Jesus makes here.

Number one, Jesus claims to be the Lord of the Sabbath. All right, now he doesn't say this exactly here. He did say this elsewhere in all three of the synoptic gospels.

But what he does say is paramount to the same thing. And it needs to be said that if he is the son of God, he isn't subject to the Sabbath law like other human beings would be, not in the same way. And if these men had a sincere desire to learn from the Lord what the Sabbath was all about, he could have given them a deeper revelation about what the Sabbath is.

For instance, he could have explained that the Sabbath was really all about, not just the Sabbath, but the whole Torah, all the laws, the 613 laws of the Torah. What they were really all about was God desiring to have a relationship with man. That's what it was all about, and that's what the Sabbath was all about.

That was the primary purpose of it. In other words, God knows that the way us men are, and we're people, just people, we tend to go through life at this frantic, chaotic pace, you know. There's never enough time, it seems like, to get everything done that needs to be done.

And so we drive ourselves, and we work, and we work, and work. And so the Lord institutes this thing called the Sabbath, where every seventh day everything stops. Everything slows down that chaotic, what's the word? Frantic works, frantic pace.

And for 24 hours, people have the opportunity to consider and meditate upon the deeper things of life, eternal things. You know, there was a time when America was practically shut down on Sundays. That's all been done away with.

But there was a time that it was that way. And if they would have been interested, Jesus could have explained that that's what the reason, or one of the main reasons, why the Lord instituted the Sabbath. He could have also explained that this was a protection, so that they wouldn't overwork themselves, overwork themselves, overwork their workers, overwork their animals.

This was a mercy from God to protect man from that driving ambition that drives him to work nonstop, day in, day out. And how many Americans do that already? He could have explained that, yes, the Father rested after creation, six days of creation. He rested, it says.

But He did not cease to care for the creation, did He? Does His activity on earth stop on the seventh day? No. What would happen to this earth if it stopped in its axis? If nothing, all the things that God does on this earth to help maintain life for all the living creatures, what if it stopped completely? No, that's ridiculous. And that's what Jesus is saying here in verse 17.

My Father is working, and I'm doing what my Father does. What is that all about? Doing mercy, fulfilling needs, helping living creatures stay alive. And so this man who's been lame for these 38 years, and I see him, yes, of course, I'm only doing what my Father would do.

That's not breaking the Sabbath. He could have explained that the Sabbath was for man and not man for the Sabbath, which is the way they twisted it and corrupted it. In other words, man is what this world is all about, why God created it so that there would be these beings that have a moral disposition and have the choice to enter into a relationship with Him.

And the Sabbath is part of, okay, the whole system that He established, but it's all about the man's good. And if the issue comes down between obeying this rule of the Sabbath or man's higher good, I promise you this God of mercy is always going to do what's best for a man. He could have explained to them that their motivations that drove them into such a frenzy over this issue of the Sabbath was not because they revered God's law, because they revered the Sabbath, that wasn't it.

It was because the Sabbath was part of their system to subjugate the people and keep them under their tyranny of their petty rules. Do I sound mad? I'm sorry if I do. I'm not mad.

Well, I am a little ticked off these days. I started thinking about what they did to Jesus. It makes me mad.

And He could have explained that actually He did reverence the Sabbath. He did have a reverence for the Sabbath because He was there when it was instituted, and He knew what was behind the instituting of it. Is that a word? The institution of it.

But to the Jews who had been raised in this system, this religious system with all its laws and rules and all this stuff, this was absolutely sacrilegious. It was unthinkable. It was outrageous that this man could claim to be able to break their Sabbath laws.

All right, number two, Jesus claimed to be one with God. Look at verse 17 here. We already just read it.

My father is working until now, and I myself am working. Verse 19, therefore Jesus answered and was saying to them, truly, truly, I say to you, the son can do nothing of himself unless it is something he sees the father doing. For whatever the father does, these things the son also does in like manner.

For the father loves the son and shows him all things that he himself is doing, and the father will show him greater works than these so that you will marvel. Wow, just tremendous. He's claiming here a unique relationship with God.

He doesn't say our father. He doesn't say your father. He says my father.

He is the unique, only begotten son of the living God, and that's what he's claiming here, and the Jews saw it. They understood, you know, some of this may be enigmatic to us, but they clearly understood the things he was saying here. Not only that, he was claiming all knowledge of what God is doing, what? Not even the greatest angel could make such a claim.

He was claiming to work and function in a unique unity with God. He was claiming to have a deep, eternal, sacred link with God. He was claiming to be one with God, no separation in intention, no separation in purpose, no separation in actions.

He and God were one, acting in perfect harmony with each other, and the Jews saw exactly what he was saying, and don't miss the absolute statements that are in this passage. Verse 19, the son can do nothing of himself. Verse 20, the father shows him all things that he himself is doing.

Verse 22, the father has given all judgment to the son. Verse 30, I can do nothing on my own initiative. No human, no one, what? No human being in his right mind could make such an outrageous claim, and he's saying he did not have the capacity.

It was not possible. It was impossible that he could do anything outside of God's will, and what's that claim? Absolute perfection. Absolute perfection.

Yeah, he was claiming to be one with God, and it was not lost on these Jewish leaders. Number three, Jesus claimed to have power. Jesus claimed to have the power to give life.

Who but God could do that? Look at verse 21, for just as the father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the son also gives life to whom he wishes. It doesn't even say whom God wishes or the father wishes, to whom he wishes. And look at verse 24, truly, truly, I say to you, you know, when he says truly, truly, he does it occasionally, he's saying, I'm telling you the truth.

I'm telling you the truth. He who hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and does not commit a judgment but has passed out of death into life. And then verse 25, truly, truly, I'm telling you the truth.

I'm telling you the truth. An hour is coming, and now is when the dead will hear the voice of the son of God, and those who live, I mean, who hear will live, will have life. For just as the father has life in himself, even so he gave to the son also to have life in himself.

That word life, and you guys hear me talk about it, is zoe, and it's not the word psyche, which we, you know, regular life that keeps any animate object going. That's a different kind of life. That's physical life.

This is spiritual life. This is the life of God. This is the life of God that can go on forever for those who belong to the Lord.

Only God can give that. He alone is the source of life. He alone is the creator and sustainer of life.

He alone has the power to reverse the processes of the material world and to bring life out of death. You know, and partly what Jesus is talking about, he's really talking about two different things. He's talking about giving eternal life to people, but he's also talking about something else, because he's going to get into the judgment here, and he's talking about raising up the dead.

And you know, as the resurrection is an important part of the plan of redemption, it only makes sense, and it's only right that the Redeemer would be the one to bring that about, right? So Jesus is claiming to be able to speak a word and bring the dead back to life. And you know, he will actually do this sometime after this. You remember Lazarus died, and they called for him, and he waited around and ended up showing up there.

And he had been dead several days by the time he arrived, and his sisters were pretty upset, and he goes to the tomb, and he says with his voice, Lazarus, come forth. Now that voice is not like your voice or my voice. That voice is the voice that commands stars, that commands, you know, all of nature.

This is the voice really spoken of in Psalm 29. The voice of the Lord is upon the waters. The God of glory thunders.

The voice of the Lord is powerful. The voice of the Lord is majestic. The voice of the Lord hues out flames of fire.

The voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness. The voice of the Lord makes the deer to calve and strips the forest bare, and in his temple everything says, glory. That's the voice that one day Jesus will utter, and that's what he did with Lazarus.

He uttered his voice, Lazarus, come forth, and that voice echoed through the entire spiritual realm, the unseen realm that we don't, who are barely, hardly aware of. That voice echoed through there, even down into the depths of Sheol, into the depths of the regions of death, and that man who had been down there for several days, suddenly life surged into his being, and he stood up there in that sepulcher and started walking out, and that's what's going to happen one day, Jesus is saying. One day, and I don't think it's that long from now, one day he's going to utter his voice, and it is going to reverberate throughout the entire universe, and everything that every human being that has died is going to be resurrected either to life eternal or into judgment, and that's what we're going to look at here, the fourth claim he makes.

Jesus claimed to have authority to judge the entire world. Wow, it's just unthinkable for a man to say something like that. Look at verse 22, for not even the father judges anyone, but he has given all judgment to the son.

Go down to verse 27, and he gave him authority to execute judgment because he is the son of man. Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming in which all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and will come forth, those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment. Only God has the authority to judge the lives of humans, only God.

To perfectly judge every human being would require the ability to search out their heart, to the omniscience, to understand all the motives and the motivations of all the things they've ever done, said, or thought. Only the Lord could do that, and Jesus is claiming that. Jesus is the judge, and he will be the arbiter who decides who goes where.

And yet, in another sense, every person really makes that decision for themselves, don't they? Way back in earth time, when a man was still living his life, he was making life decisions that were determining his eternal outcome. You guys are making very big decisions during your time here, I promise you you are, because this really is a crossroads for your life. The resurrection does not change a person's character.

All it is, it's a process, it's a, what's the word, almost like something a machine would do. It's just, you know, it's production, maybe, kind of. It's just a process that undergoes, it's like a thoughtless process.

That's probably not saying it right either. Okay, all I'm trying to say is the resurrection does not change a person's character. It is simply a process that awakens a dead person and carries them forth to one direction or the other.

Either it carries them forth to the presence of God, to the bema seat judgment, where they will be judged only in accordance to what rewards they'll receive, or it will be carrying them forth to the realm of death, the great white throne judgment, where they will give an accounting for their lives and their rejection of Jesus Christ. That's all the resurrection does, okay? But Jesus has the perfect discernment to know who goes where, and who but God could make a claim like that? Who but God? I want to read this famous quote by C.S. Lewis. I'm sure many of you have heard this before and read it.

A man who is merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic on the level with the man who says he's a poached egg, or he would be the devil of hell. You must make your choice.

Either this man was and is the son of God or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon, or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God, but let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us.

He did not intend to. Yeah, that is a very powerful revelation, really, that Lewis had, and it's the truth. It's the absolute truth, and you really see it here in John chapter 5. All right, so this whole controversy began because Jesus healed this man, right? He healed him, and this sent these religious leaders just, they just were beside themselves, and they immediately start lecturing him on why it was wrong for him to do such a thing, to break their rules, but you know, you see what Jesus does here? He absolutely turns the tables, and for the first time, he comes right out, and he tells Jerusalem and all the Jewish leaders of Israel, he tells them exactly who he is.

I am the son of the living God. He says it here. Calls himself the son of God, but then it's about in verse 38, he starts kind of concluding, wrapping up the things he's been saying, and he begins to explain to them why they can't receive what he's saying.

You know, now I know for myself, if the Lord ever said something to me like this, like, Steve, you're not hearing me, and let me explain why. Let me tell you, I'd be flat on my face, ears wide open. Please, Lord, tell me what I am missing, but that was not in the heart of these men, and that is either in your heart, or it's not, and I don't know how to figure out why or what.

That's beyond my pay grade. It's beyond any human's pay grade. I can just tell you that.

Only God understands those things, but I will tell you this. These people, their hearts were shut closed to the Lord. He says in verse 38, you do not have his word abiding in you, and he's about to say something very profound here, that they search the scriptures.

You know, they search. That word, search, means to thoroughly investigate. That's what that word means.

It's the word he uses when he spoke to the church of Thyatira in Revelation 2. He said, I am he who searches. I thoroughly investigate the minds and hearts, and I will give to each one of you according to your deeds. That's the kind of total investigation that these Pharisees and scribes did with the word of God.

They thoroughly investigated it. They knew Genesis 1 to Malachi chapter 4. They knew it. It's been said that there were those who had it all memorized, and I don't know if that's true, but I promise you they had a lot of it memorized.

Probably all the Torah was memorized. They did a thorough search. They were searching in the right place, weren't they? They weren't off into Eastern mysticism.

They weren't into the Roman pantheon or something like that, Greek pantheon. No, they were in the scriptures sent by the Lord. They were in the right place, and they were looking for the right thing, eternal life.

How to find it? You could not find a better thing to try to learn about, and yet he says, you do not have his word abiding in you. I mean, let me just tell you, there are a lot of religious people within the Christian religion that do the same thing. They know scripture frontwards, backwards, inside, and out, but they never let it enter their hearts.

They're scholars. I don't mean necessarily official scholars, but they know the word of God. They have spent a lot of time in it, but it never was allowed to enter their hearts, and so I think that, you know, Jesus would have been saying to them, in a sense, you are to be commended that you search the scriptures.

The problem is that you search them through your own filter. That's what the problem is. Not only that, but you surround yourself with men who think just like you think, and you find teachers that will scratch your itching ears, in other words, tell you what you want to hear.

Your filter has been shaped by what you want religion to be, and it's no different from then to now, and although Jesus had shared some of the most profound spiritual realities about God that man had ever heard, they were so entrenched in their religious system that they couldn't hear his words. They couldn't hear what he was saying because he didn't fit into their belief system, because to believe what Jesus claimed would have meant walking away from their system. It would mean that they would have to admit that they were completely wrong in their understanding of scripture up to that point.

They would have to renounce most of what they had believed and taught their entire lives. They would have to give up their status, and not only that, their income. They would be cast out of the Jewish system, cast out of the synagogue, and you know that goes on to talk about that, that that was their fear.

It would mean, and this was the one thing, they could not and would not abide, and this describes the difference between men and boys in the church today. They would not acknowledge in a real way their sinful condition and repent of it. They would not do it unwilling, and actually verse 40 says it right there, you are unwilling to come to me so that you may have life.

Man, I could just imagine that one statement reverberating in their minds all these 2,000 years and off into the future. You were unwilling. I just wanted to give you life, but you were unwilling.

He says the same thing to him again later at the end of Matthew 23 when he just exhorciates the Pharisees and their system. He said, I wanted to just gather you like a hen gathers her chicks, but you were unwilling, and therefore your house is being left to you desolate, and most people always tend to think of that as being the temple, but I'm telling you it's the house of their soul, an eternal condition of desolation of soul. Anybody here want that? You better make sure that you're not one of the unwilling because it could be argued that up to the point you got here, you were, right? It could be argued.

I'm not saying it's necessarily true, but it could certainly be argued. All right, now let me bring this home to you because I know that you don't want to be left out on this. You know, you guys come here with a Christian history, meaning, you know, your history, your own personal history.

Every one of you came from different churches, I assume, and a lot of different denominations and backgrounds, ethnic and geographical, all over the place, all kinds of backgrounds, but all of you had a Christian involved with the church at one level or another, right? Isn't that true? Now, some of you come in here, there are some who come in here hungry. I mean, you know, we don't have to convince them of anything. Some of you come in here like you know, I'm in trouble.

And I've heard it said many times that people come onto this property and they sense the presence of God in this place. And some come in and instantly, they know they're in the right place. They don't need someone to tell them.

They know. And they are all ears. Just tell me what I need, what I need to do.

Please just tell me. And we don't have to fight and battle with them for months. You know, they just instantly know.

But there's others, and I would say this is probably the majority to one level or another, come in here questioning things. And a lot of it, okay, a lot of it humanly is understandable because we do things different than most churches do. Right? I mean, is there anyone here that came out of a church background that you would say is very similar to what goes on here at Pure Life? Not a one? Wait a minute, we got a brother back there and we got one here.

Okay. That means you two guys should be leading the class, right? Huh? No, most of you came from different backgrounds, and we understand that, and we try to be patient and realize that. It's a real cultural shift for many of you.

The way we worship and stuff, you know, we understand. I mean, we're not going to change what we do because we know that God told us how to do it, and we know it brings glory to him, and we know it allows the presence of God to be in this place, and that's what you guys are here to experience. So we're not going to change.

I'm sorry. But we do understand that it can be a bit of a struggle for you, at least some of you. But, okay, struggle's one thing, but, you know, and questioning, you know, why is things like they are here? Okay, that's, yeah, that's all understandable.

But when it comes from a person who is very cynical and is basically already in his mind, I'm not going to believe anything you say. And that's the mindset that some of you come in here with. And so the criticism starts, and the picking everything apart.

And you know what? That is just nothing but extreme pride. That's what that is. That's just extreme pride.

And listen, I don't even fault you, in a sense, for that, because I did the same thing 40 years ago when I was in Bible school. Did the exact same thing. Had the same nasty, arrogant attitude that I knew better than everyone.

And God had to take, rake me through the coals to humble me, to get me to realize I didn't know nothing. Just didn't know nothing. But anyway, so people with that mindset, the big questions they can often have is, come in here with the attitude, do they have the same traditions I have? Do they worship like I'm accustomed to worshipping? Do they do things like we do them? And listen, you know, even that isn't so bad.

Those questions aren't like sinful or terrible or something. But let me give you some better questions that would be wiser of you to ask of yourselves when you come in here. Are these people teaching the truth? Wouldn't you say that's more important than we do things like you are accustomed to? Right? Is that right? Do I sense the Lord in this place? Would you think that would be important? You're not very enthusiastic, but I guess you mean it.

Do these people seem to live what they preach? I mean, you don't want a bunch of hypocrites here, do you? We're still in our sexual sin, but we just come up with this big act that we put on for you. Anyone believe that of us? I hope not. I paid a dear price, let me tell you, 40 years of it.

No, it's not like that. You know, guys, the Lord isn't looking for religious-minded men. Jesus said the Father is searching.

He has his own search going on. Right? Just in the previous chapter, that he said this, the Father is seeking for those who will worship him in the Spirit and in truth. That's what the Father is looking for.

Is that describing you? If not, it can become you. You can become that person. You don't have to stay in what you were in in the past.

God has a brand new life for you, and you can come into it, and it doesn't have to look like pure life. I don't care if it looks like pure life. I only care if it looks like Jesus.

That's all I care about.

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