

The Lord Jesus Elaborates on His Claim to be God

John 5:19-23

John 5:19-23 – *“Then Jesus answered and said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner.”²⁰ For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself does; and He will show Him greater works than these, that you may marvel.²¹ For as the Father raises the dead and gives life to them, even so the Son gives life to whom He will.²² For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son,²³ that all should honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him.”*

Background Notes

In verse 19 we read, *“Then Jesus answered and said to them...”* Who is the *“them”* in verse 19? To whom was Jesus talking in these verses? Jesus was talking to the Jewish leaders who were finding fault with Him. They were finding fault with Him because He healed the paralyzed man at the pool of Bethesda on the Sabbath day – an act of mercy!

They were finding fault with Him because Jesus had clearly claimed to be God. *“But Jesus answered them, “My Father has been working until now, and I have been working” (v17).* Notice that the Lord didn’t say “Our Father” – he said **“My Father.”** When he said that, He was claiming a special relationship with God, a relationship that no one else had.

By saying, *“My Father has been working until now, and I have been working,”* the Lord Jesus placed Himself on the same level as God the Father! This was a clear claim to deity. And the Jewish leaders knew exactly what Jesus was claiming. *“For this reason the Jews tried all the harder to kill Him, not only because He was breaking the Sabbath, but He was even calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God”(v18).*

In verses 19-23 the Lord elaborated on His claim to be God. These verses clearly show that the Jews did **not** misunderstand what the Lord said back in verse 17. They knew that Jesus had very definitely claimed to be God. **Fully God!**

Doctrinal / Teaching Points

1. Jesus claimed the attributes of God for Himself.

Jesus claimed the **attributes of God** for Himself. When we say the “attributes of God,” we mean the qualities of character that are inherent to God alone.

Three of the essential attributes of God are His omniscience, omnipotence, and omnipresence. Omniscience means “all-knowing.” God knows everything. Omnipotence means “all-powerful.” God has infinite power. Omnipresence means “present everywhere at once.” God is omnipresent.

As God, Jesus claimed these attributes for Himself. Listen to the Lord’s claims again: *“Then Jesus answered and said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner. For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself does; and He will show Him greater works than these, that you may marvel” (v19-20).*

Omniscience is an attribute of God. When the Lord said that the Father loves Him, and shows Him all things that the Father Himself does (v20), He was not only claiming a special love relationship with the Father - He was claiming **omniscience**. He **knows all things** that God does! God is sovereign. God controls everything, so if Jesus knows everything God does, Jesus knows everything. He is omniscient. Omniscience is an attribute of God. Jesus claimed omniscience for Himself; therefore, He claimed to be no less than God.

Omnipotence is an attribute of God. The Lord said, *“for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner” (v19).* That is a claim to **omnipotence**. Whatever God does, the **Son also does** in like manner. Think of everything that God does in this vast universe. By His infinite power, He created and upholds the universe - from the smallest subatomic particles to the largest galaxies! Jesus was claiming that for Himself. Only God has infinite power, so Jesus clearly was claiming to be God.

The Lord Jesus’ claim of omnipotence is certainly supported by the teaching of the rest of the New Testament. In Colossians 1:16 *“For by Him [that is, by Jesus Christ] all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.”* That’s the omnipotence of Christ! Hebrews 1:3 says, *“[Jesus Christ] being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power...”* That’s the omnipotence of Jesus Christ!

Omnipresence is an attribute of God. What about Jesus’ claim of **omnipresence**? Here in John 5:19 the Lord implied that He **sees everything** the Father does. It is interesting that He used the word “see” and not just the word “know.” *“Jesus said, “Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner.”* Now while this is not a direct claim to omnipresence, and the word “see” might be used figuratively here, this statement at least hints that the Lord may have had His omnipresence in mind when He made the claim to “see” everything God does.

The doctrine of the omnipresence of God states that “all of God is in all places at all times.” The physical body of our Lord Jesus was in only one place at a time, but that does not deny Jesus Christ’s attribute of omnipresence. Our Lord is alive today, bodily, in His resurrection body. His resurrection body **was** and **is** a material body. He will return bodily. And yet

our Lord is omnipresent. Jesus said *“For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them”* (Matthew 18:20). That requires omnipresence! The Lord Jesus **was** and **is** omnipresent.

Jesus claimed the *attributes* of God for Himself.

2. Jesus claimed the activities of God for Himself.

There are two **divine activities** that the Lord claimed for Himself – activities that are activities of God alone.

The first activity is **the giving of life**: *“For as the Father raises the dead and gives life to them, even so the Son gives life to whom He will”* (v21). The second activity is **the final judging of all mankind**: *“For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son”* (v22).

In reference to the giving of life, the idea is more than just the act of raising people from the dead. The Lord said that His critics would see greater works than the healing of the paralyzed man at the pool of Bethesda, and that they would marvel (v20), and that certainly includes raising the dead. These “greater works” would include the raising of Lazarus from the dead.

In verse 21 the Lord said: *“For as the Father raises the dead and gives life to them, even so the Son gives life to whom He will.”* The Greek word used here for “life” is the word “*zoe*,” which is a word that includes more than just physical life. If Jesus meant to imply giving physical life only by raising the dead, the Greek word “*bios*” would have been used. (That’s the Greek word from which we get our English word “biology.”) So the idea in verse 21 is not just the ability to raise the dead back to physical life, but the **ability to give eternal life**. When the Lord Jesus said, *“even so the Son gives life to whom He will”* (v21), He was claiming that **He** determines who gets eternal life. If that is not a claim to be God, then I don’t know what is!

The other activity of God that Jesus claimed for Himself is the final judgment of mankind: *“For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son”* (v22). The Bible clearly teaches that there will be a final judgment. Every person will answer to God, the Creator of all. The Jews listening to Jesus certainly were aware of this - but the shocking truth was that Jesus was claiming this activity for **Himself!** What a claim!

Jesus claimed the activities of God for Himself.

Practical application

Do you worship a pagan god?

Do you worship a pagan god? What do we mean by a “pagan” god? Pagans worship gods of their own choosing or their own making: the sun, the moon, a mountain, a tree, statues or images made of wood or stone. Is it possible that you worship a god of **your** own choosing or making?

In verse 23 we read, “*all should honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him.*” If you say that you worship God but not Jesus, because you think Jesus was only a good man, then you don’t worship the God of the Bible! You worship a pagan god – a god that you made up according to your own specifications.

Jesus said, “*He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him*”(v23). If you don’t give the Lord Jesus Christ the same divine status as the Lord God Almighty, you don’t worship the almighty God. You don’t worship the God of the Bible. You have made up “your own God.” You worship a pagan god!

Maybe we should say this even more bluntly. If you are a Unitarian, or a Mormon, or a Jehovah Witness, then you don’t give Jesus the same divine status that you give to God, and you’re not worshipping the God of the Bible at all! You’re worshipping a god of your own choosing or making – a pagan god.

Once again: “*He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him.*” So let’s ask that question one more time: Do you worship God, the God of the Bible - or a pagan god?