

The Gospel of John  
Lesson 9 – John 5  
**The Son at Work**

This chapter focuses on two major themes. These themes are 1) Jesus (the son) does the work of God (the Father) and 2) there is adequate testimony to Jesus' identity such that all persons (God so loved the world) should believe in him.

**The Son does the work of the Father:** In vs. 17 Jesus tells his audience that "My Father is still working, and I also am working." There are two aspects of God's work that are contained in this chapter. The first is that God heals/makes alive. The context for this theme is the idea that God is at work restoring creation. Examples of Jesus doing the work of God begin with his healing the man at the Pool of Bethzatha. This pool, which has been excavated, was a mikvah that was believed to be a place in which the Spirit of God would heal the first person in the water after the water was stirred. Jesus, acting on behalf of the Spirit, heals a man who was lame...without getting the man's permission or request. Thus, Jesus is doing what only God could do. This miracle, by the way, follows the standard miracle formula in the New Testament which is a problem is demonstrated (the man cannot walk), an intervention (Jesus tells the man to walk), proof of the miracle (the man takes his mat and walks). This idea of doing the work of the Father by giving life continues with Jesus' comments about bringing the dead back to life. By the time that the book of John is written, many Jews and certainly all Christians, believed in a world view in which the dead waited for a general resurrection, followed by judgment, which would send people to either life or condemnation (vs. 29). For John, choosing Jesus is choosing life.

The second aspect of this doing the work of the Father is being the judge. We can see this is vs. 27 Where Jesus says "...and he (God) has given him (Jesus) authority to execute judgment because he is the Son of Man (a saving figure from the Book of Daniel). These two aspects are tied together in vs. 25 where Jesus says, "For just as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself." Thus, God has given life to Jesus who can then give it to others (now in healing and later in resurrection).

**There is adequate testimony to the Jesus identity:** One of the great questions that the early church had to answer was why didn't the Jews believe in Jesus? If Jesus was indeed the Jewish/universal messiah, why was he rejected. The answer comes in verse 42 when Jesus says, "But I know that you do not have the love of God in you." And, at least in John, Jesus can say this because there is plentiful testimony to Jesus. The first testimony Jesus would point to is his own work since he is doing the work of the Father by giving life. Second, he can point to the testimony of John the Baptist. In vs. 32-33 were told that the people sent folks to John to find out if he was the Messiah but found out that not only was John not the Messiah, but that John testified that Jesus was the Messiah. Third, we are told in vs. 37 that God personally vouched for Jesus. "And the Father who sent me has himself testified on my behalf." Finally, we have Moses offering testimony to Jesus in vs. 47. "If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me."

**Summary:** it is hard to argue that John is not an anti-Jewish story. Regardless of how many ways we try to make excuses for the language of "the Jews" we cannot help but see the Gospel's bias against Jesus' people. I would argue that the reason for this is that the Johannine community had been expelled from the synagogues as they developed their theology of Jesus being the incarnate Word. This theology made sense to them because they had experienced new life in and through faith in Jesus and found it hard to fathom why others could not. The only explanation was that the Jews did not love/listen to God.

**Questions:**

1. Which of these two aspects of this chapter is most meaningful to you and why?
2. Why do you believe in Jesus? Whose testimony helped you believe?
3. How do you come to grips with the anti-Jewish nature of the Gospel?