



International Bible Study Commentary

Verse-by-Verse Bible Lessons Thru the Bible

L.G. Parkhurst, Jr.

John 5:19-29 Commentary New Revised Standard Version

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further follow the verse-by-verse [*International Bible Study Commentary*](#). **Study Hints for Discussion and Thinking Further** will help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion: these hints are available on the *International Bible Study Commentary* website along with the *International Bible Lesson* that you may want to read to your class as part of your Bible study. You can discuss each week's commentary and lesson at the [*International Bible Study Forum*](#).

(John 5:19) Jesus said to them, “Very truly, I tell you, the Son can do nothing on his own, but only what he sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, the Son does likewise.

We learned in John 5:18 that the Jews (by which John meant some of the religious authorities, rabbis, Pharisees, and Sadducees, for they were all Jews) wanted to kill Jesus because Jesus was “breaking the Sabbath” and “calling God his own Father, thereby making himself equal to God.”

With respect to their first charge against Him, Jesus said that He was not doing what He was doing on the Sabbath by himself or because of His own independent decision-making, but God the Father was also involved with Him when He was healing or “working” on the Sabbath. Jesus said that He was only doing what He saw the Father doing on the Sabbath and whatever the Father did, Jesus said He would also do. He was following the example of His loving Father who had compassion for all people seven days a week.

As we would say today, when Jesus replied to them, He “doubled down” on agreeing with their accusation; which means, in the following verses and chapters, Jesus did not deny the accusation that He was “making himself equal to God,” but became “more tenacious, zealous, or resolute” in claiming that God was His own Father and He was equal to God—which He further defined and explained in subsequent chapters in the Gospel of John. Jesus’ words “Very truly” or “Truly, truly” or “Verily, verily” can be interpreted to mean “This is reality” with the added emphasis “This is real reality” or “This is objective truth and reality” or “What I am about to say is True Truth about God and myself.” The Father and the Son are of the same character, essence, and nature as the Bible describes God. The Father and the Son think and act in perfect unity. They each know what the other is thinking, doing, and planning to do. They are so united in everything they do that the Son cannot and will not do anything independently from His Father. Whatever God the Father

can do, the Son can do. Whatever God the Father does in relation to creation or anything else, God the Son does likewise. God the Father and God the Son always think and act together.

(John 5:20) The Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing; and he will show him greater works than these, so that you will be astonished.

Jesus was trying to describe His perfect relationship with God the Father in words that people can understand. The Father and the Son live together in a perfect relationship of love, with each One respecting the personhood, rights, and responsibilities of the other. They always do what is best for one another with never a disagreement. They always do what is perfect and in perfect agreement. Jesus' hearers would understand how a human father might teach his son his trade or occupation for the benefit of them both and for others. By analogy, Jesus was saying that God the Father showed Him ALL that He was doing for their benefit, for the benefit of all that exists, and especially for the benefit of those Jesus came into the world to save from sin and death. Jesus claimed that everything He was doing was perfectly consistent with the way His Father acted. From eternity, before Jesus was born in human flesh, God the Father showed Jesus all that He was doing whenever He did anything, and they worked together in everything (see John 1:1-3). Jesus claimed that He was still watching all that the Father was doing, and He

was still doing what the Father was doing. Jesus taught that whatever He did was perfectly consistent with what the Father had done in the past and what the Father was doing in the present. Jesus claimed that whenever He healed someone, even on the Sabbath, He was doing what the Father did and He had a right to do whatever He saw the Father doing. No mere human being has made or can make claims similar to Jesus' claims about God and himself and demonstrate by their actions that their claims about being one with God and doing the works of God are true. Only Jesus, the true Son of God, has ever done that. When Jesus healed the royal official's son from twenty miles away and when He healed the diseased man at the pool of Bethesda on the Sabbath, He was only beginning to show the works of God, and in the days ahead the Father would show Jesus even greater works to do and He would do them. To demonstrate that what He taught was true, Jesus said He would do works of God that would astonish everyone, and He kept His promise.

(John 5:21) Indeed, just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whomever he wishes.

The Jews knew that only God could raise the dead, and Jesus said that He could also raise the dead and give life to whomever He chose. Jesus claimed that He could legally do and had the power to do whatever God could do. For this claim to be true, Jesus would need to raise the dead and give them life. In Matthew 9:18-26, Matthew

described how Jesus raised the daughter of a synagogue leader who had just died. In Luke 7:11-17, Luke described how Jesus raised a widow's son from the dead. According to Jewish burial customs, the son had been dead less than twenty-four hours. In John 12, John described how Jesus raised Lazarus from the tomb after he had been in the tomb four days. The Jews would see Him do these astonishing works, but many of the religious leaders still refused to believe His claims that He was equal to God.

(John 5:22) The Father judges no one but has given all judgment to the Son,

Because God the Father and God the Son are equal, Jesus could see into the heart and understand the thoughts and intentions of everyone He met. Only God can see into and understand all that is in a person; therefore, only God can judge someone perfectly and without any error whatsoever. In John 8:44, Jesus perfectly judged some of the religious leaders and declared to them, "You are from your father the devil, and you choose to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks according to his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies." The Father gave the Son the responsibility to make honest judgments, and He did. We remember that in John 2:25, John wrote that Jesus knew all people "and needed no one to testify about anyone; for he himself knew what was in everyone." Unlike the religious leaders, Jesus always chose to do whatever

His Father desired and Jesus always spoke the truth. Furthermore, Jesus could always judge correctly what people needed; so, in John 5:14, Jesus could correctly say to the man He had healed, “See, you have been made well! Do not sin any more, so that nothing worse happens to you.”

(John 5:23) so that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. Anyone who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him.

Jesus continued to claim His equality to God when He said that all honor, (love, praise, glory, respect, obedience, and worship) that the Bible commands people were to give to God the Father were also to be given to Him. As God the Son, Jesus did what the Father did, and Jesus deserves the same honor, (love, praise, glory, respect, obedience, and worship) that the Bible teaches we should give to God alone. Jesus’ works on earth were clearly the works of God, and God the Father would not have told Jesus to do these works if He had not intended for people to honor Jesus as they honored Him. To learn about Jesus, to learn about Jesus’ words and works, and not honor Jesus as God is to disobey and dishonor God the Father (most of the religious leaders refused to honor Jesus as the Son of God; instead, they wanted to kill Jesus). Unless they are spiritual infants still learning the truth about Jesus, a person who claims to be a Christian, but who does not love, honor, and obey Jesus as God the Son cannot be a

Christian—they do not know Jesus as Jesus has revealed himself in the Bible. True Christians love, honor, and obey Jesus from their hearts according to the Bible’s teachings. Christians are not perfect, but they move forward and with the intention to love, honor, and obey Jesus in everything. To dishonor the Son of God is to dishonor God the Father, and when the religious leaders killed Jesus, they dishonored the Father and the Son.

(John 5:24) Very truly, I tell you, anyone who hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life, and does not come under judgment, but has passed from death to life.

Again, Jesus claimed, “This is reality, this is the way it is regarding God the Father and the Son of God. This is the way eternal life and judgment works.” Jesus claimed that if you hear His “word” (meaning His teaching or the good news) and if you believe the Father who sent Him according to His word; then, you have eternal life in the present and will have eternal life forever. Eternal life is to truly know God the Father and God the Son. In John 17:3, Jesus prayed and proclaimed, “And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.” In several ways, John’s Gospel emphasized Jesus’ words to Nicodemus in John 3:16, “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.” Those who believe in Jesus according to the Bible’s teachings will not come under judgment or

condemnation after their bodies die. Because they truly know the true God, they have “passed from death to life,” In John 11:26, Jesus told Martha, “Everyone who lives and believes in me will never die.” Though Lazarus had been in the tomb four days, he had not died. Jesus returned Lazarus to a completely restored human body, a body that would later die again. If we believe in Jesus as revealed in the Bible, we will never die spiritually and someday we will rise again as Jesus promised.

(John 5:25) “Very truly, I tell you, the hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live.”

For the third time in His proclamation, Jesus declared, “This is truly true.” The time was not only coming, but in His presence the time was now within their hearing—people could hear the voice of the Son of God. Jesus claimed that at that very moment, as He spoke to them, they were hearing the voice of the One who was equal to God the Father. The word “hear” is used in two ways. The spiritually dead were hearing the voice of the Son of God as Jesus was teaching. Those who truly heard and responded by believing Jesus and by believing in Jesus would not remain spiritually dead, but live. They would pass through physical death to be with God forever. Eternal life is the gift of Jesus to all who believe in Him. Some of the physically dead, such as Lazarus, also heard the voice of God; therefore, Lazarus lived again spiritually

and physically. Though Lazarus would die again physically, because he lived spiritually and believed the good news Jesus preached, he would pass through physical death into everlasting life.

(John 5:26) For just as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself;

Jesus continued to “double down” as He spoke to the religious leaders and the crowd around them. God the Father self-exists: He does not depend on anyone or anything to exist. God does not need food, clothing, shelter, atoms or molecules to exist. God exists because God exists, and God will exist throughout eternity. Jesus said that as the Son of God He also self-exists. Jesus did not depend on anyone or anything to exist. As the incarnate Son of God in human flesh, as fully human, Jesus’ body did depend on food and water, and Jesus truly suffered as we do when deprived of food and water. But as fully God, Jesus exists as God exists. Because Jesus has life in himself, He could say in John 10:17-18, “For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father.”

(John 5:27) and he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man.

Next, Jesus claimed to fulfill the prophet Daniel as the “Son of Man,” which was looked upon as a description of the promised Messiah. In Daniel 7:13-14 (NASB), Daniel wrote, “I kept looking in the night visions, And behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, And He came up to the Ancient of Days And was presented before Him. And to Him was given dominion, Glory and a kingdom, That all the peoples, nations and men of every language Might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion Which will not pass away; And His kingdom is one Which will not be destroyed.” As God the King, Jesus had dominion, glory, and a kingdom; furthermore, all peoples, nations, and those of every language were to serve Jesus, the Son of Man. Jesus, as King of the universe, had the authority to execute judgment on all people and nations. The kingdom of Jesus, the Son of Man, would be everlasting and would never be destroyed; therefore, Jesus said that He had been given the power and authority to execute judgment as God revealed to Daniel. Jesus had the “authority to execute judgment” given to Him by the “Ancient of Days” or the “Ancient One” (God the Father).

(John 5:28) Do not be astonished at this; for the hour is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice

Next, Jesus looked toward the future “resurrection of the dead,” a belief held by the Pharisees but not the Sadducees: “The Sadducees say that there is no

resurrection, or angel, or spirit; but the Pharisees acknowledge all three” (Acts 23:8). Notice: Jesus did not say, “and is now here,” for He was talking about the future resurrection of ALL the dead on the Day of Judgment. Jesus promised that ALL who are or will be physically dead throughout human history from “all peoples, nations, and languages” will rise from the dead when they hear His voice. Throughout the gospels, Jesus made breathtaking claims about himself and the future that God the Father expects us to believe, and by believing in Jesus we will receive the gift of eternal life and be given the power to become children of God (John 1:12).

(John 5:29) and will come out—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.”

Not only will the physically dead hear His voice, but they will come out of their graves when they hear Him call them—even more dramatically than the time Jesus called Lazarus to come forth from his grave. Jesus again led His listeners to think of the prophet Daniel, and Jesus confirmed the words of Daniel in Daniel 12:2,3 where Daniel foretold, “Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.” The Bible teaches that those who believe in Jesus Christ as

the Son of God, their Lord and Savior, receive the gift of eternal life. And we learned in John 3:18,19: “Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil.” Those who have received Jesus and have believed in His name will do good because they have been given the power to live as children of God—they can trust in Jesus’ promise that they will receive “the resurrection of life.” When the Apostle Paul wrote of the judgment believers will face, he said in 1 Corinthians 3:11-15, “For no one can lay any foundation other than the one that has been laid; that foundation is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw—the work of each builder will become visible, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each has done. If what has been built on the foundation survives, the builder will receive a reward. If the work is burned up, the builder will suffer loss; the builder will be saved, but only as through fire.” Those who rise to the resurrection of condemnation are those who “loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil.” One reason those who love the light will be separated from those who love darkness is because these two groups are not happy together in this life and they would make each other completely miserable for eternity if left together in

the life to come. As Jesus emphasized to Nicodemus, God the Father sent His Son into the world for our benefit, for the benefit of the world, for the benefit of sinners: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.”

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. What does the Son do that the Father does? Or, how would you compare what the Father does with what the Son does?
2. Why does the Father show the Son all that He himself is doing?
3. What are some of the astonishing things that Jesus said He would do that He did?
4. Why has the Father given all judgment to the Son?
5. How can someone avoid coming under judgment? What does “coming under judgment” mean?

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Contact: P.O. Box 1052, Edmond, Oklahoma, 73083 and lgp@theiblf.com.