

# CONCERNING THE WAY

October 27, 2009

## LESSON 79: THE GOSPEL OF JOHN



### Chapter 4 – Christ the Water of Life

Most of this chapter is about Jesus meeting and speaking with a Samaritan woman. Who were the Samaritans? If you look at the maps of Israel in Jesus' day in the back of your Bible, Samaria was in the center of Israel. It was a territory that was occupied by the Assyrians who conquered the Northern Kingdom of Israel in 722 B.C. Many of the Jews were deported, but some stayed and mingled with the foreigners who came to settle there, including Assyrians, Medes, and Babylonians. The descendants of this racial mix became the Samaritans, and they only followed the Torah (first five books of the Bible). The Jews generally hated them, both because they refused to worship in Jerusalem, and also because the Samaritans sided with the Syrians in their wars against the Jews in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C.

To get around in Israel, sometimes you would need to go through Samaria, but orthodox Jews wouldn't do it, they would go far out of their way to go around Samaria, even to this day. There is still an enclave of Samaritan people in that area today, and they still sacrifice animals.

**John 4:1-4** Now when Jesus knew that the Pharisees had heard that he was winning and baptizing more disciples than John (2) (although Jesus himself was not baptizing, but his disciples were), (3) he left Judea and set out once more for Galilee. (4) But he had to pass through Samaria.

Jesus knew that the Pharisees were really starting to take notice of Him, so to avoid conflict (because it wasn't yet time), He went back to Galilee. Notice it says that Jesus wasn't baptizing here, that His disciples were doing it. John 3:22 said He was baptizing then, so maybe He had decided to delegate this task to His disciples at this point.

Actually they didn't have to go through Samaria, geographically speaking. The normal route from Judea to Galilee was up along the eastern side of the Jordan River. When John is saying He had to go this way, it must have been because He felt it was necessary to speak to the Samaritan people.

**John 4:5-6** Now he came to a Samaritan town called Sychar, near the plot of land that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. (6) Jacob's well was there, so Jesus, since he was tired from the journey, sat right down beside the well. It was about noon.

The plot of land that Jacob bought is described in Genesis 33:18-19, and he gave it to Joseph in Genesis 48:21-22. Jesus became thirsty and He could become tired. Even though He was God, He was also fully human.

**John 4:7-9** A Samaritan woman came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me some water to drink." (8) (For his disciples had gone off into the town to buy supplies.) (9) So the Samaritan woman said to him, "How can you — a Jew — ask me, a Samaritan woman, for water to drink?" (For Jews use nothing in common with Samaritans.)

John inserts a parenthesis here, another indication he was writing this book to Gentiles, people that

may not have known about Jewish traditions. To orthodox Jews, Samaritans were considered ritually impure or unclean. They would have considered drinking from anything that a Samaritan had touched unthinkable, because it would make them unclean.

The fact that the woman came to the well at noon tells us she must have had a bad reputation, most women would come much earlier to avoid the heat of the day. The rest of the women may have shunned her because of her immoral lifestyle. You need to understand how unusual this was:

*"On the issue of gender prejudice, male Jewish attitudes at the time are reflected in the following rabbinic citations: "One should not talk with a woman on the street, not even with his own wife, and certainly not with somebody else's wife, because of the gossip of men," and "It is forbidden to give a woman any greeting."*

*Bruce Milne*

**John 4:10** Jesus answered her, "If you had known the gift of God and who it is who said to you, 'Give me some water to drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water."

Here again, like He did with Nicodemus, Jesus is making a spiritual point about Himself, but the woman will miss it and go straight to the physical. Jesus, of course, knew everything about this woman, as we'll find out, and He knew there was a spiritual vacuum in her life. He was trying to bring that out in a conversation with her.

**John 4:11-12** "Sir," the woman said to him, "you have no bucket and the well is deep; where then do you get this living water? (12) Surely you're not greater than our ancestor Jacob, are you? For he gave us this well and drank from it himself, along with his sons and his livestock."

She was thinking Jesus knew about some other physical source of water that was better than the well. Of course the "living water" Jesus was speaking of was eternal life through the Spirit (Jeremiah 2:13; Zechariah 14:8; John 7:38-39).

**John 4:13-14** Jesus replied, "Everyone who drinks some of this water will be thirsty again. (14) But whoever drinks some of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again, but the water that I will give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up to eternal life."

Have you heard the expression that we all have a "God-sized hole in our hearts"? God has placed a thirst for Him in all of our hearts. People try to satisfy that thirst in all kinds of ways, but they are all temporary. The water that Jesus gives satisfies that thirst forever and will become a fountain!

**John 4:15-16** The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water." (16) He said to her, "Go call your husband and come back here."

Well, she's halfway there! She's still thinking about physical water, but she now realizes He's speaking of something miraculous, so she's moving in the direction Jesus wants her to go, she's starting to think spiritually.

**John 4:17-18** The woman replied, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "Right you are when you said, 'I have no husband,' (18) for you have had five husbands, and the man you are living with now is not your husband. This you said truthfully!"

Jesus was a master (of course) at getting at the heart of people where they really were. And He knows you and me the same way. Jesus knew that this woman was trying to fill up the emptiness inside her with a series of relationships with men. He could have lectured her on the sins of divorce and adultery and promiscuity. But He didn't. He knew that she was thirsting for love, acceptance, and security, but she had been looking for it in the wrong men. He was offering her the only thing that could truly quench her thirst, eternal life through a relationship with Him, the real Mr. Right.

**John 4:19-20** The woman said to him, "Sir, I see that you are a prophet. (20) Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you people say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem."

Suddenly she realizes that there is more to this man than she thought. Now Jesus has her full attention. The Samaritans didn't regard Jerusalem as the place to worship God. They revered the patriarchs who had settled in this area, and they worshipped on nearby Mt. Gerizim.

**John 4:21** Jesus said to her, "Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem."

Jesus is prophetically speaking of a time where God will be worshipped in no special place, but anywhere, which is the time we are in today. By the way, even in that time you could worship God anywhere and there were synagogues established in every fair-sized town and city. But Jerusalem was regarded as the place where all people must come to offer sacrifice. The focus was on Jerusalem. But Jesus is hinting at the fact that someday the temple would be destroyed, sacrifices would end, and Jerusalem would no longer be the focus of worship.

**John 4:22** You people worship what you do not know. We worship what we know, because salvation is from the Jews.

This may seem kind of harsh, but it's true! Salvation, not just for the Samaritans, but for all of us, came from the Jews. They were given all the scriptures, all the Revelation from God! The Samaritans only accepted the first five books of the Bible - they didn't believe in the rest of the Old Testament - the books of the prophets, the Psalms, etc.

**John 4:23-24** But a time is coming — and now is here — when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such people to be his worshipers. God is spirit, and the people who worship him must worship in spirit and truth."

Here Jesus is going beyond Jerusalem. You must remember that in this age the Law of Moses prescribed that Jerusalem was the center of worship, the place of sacrifice. And that is about to cease. God is looking for people who will worship Him in their spirit, not just in some physical place. God wants our hearts, our spirits. He also wants people who will worship Him in Truth, not the traditions of man.

Wait a minute, wasn't it God that gave the Mosaic Law, with all its commands for worship and ceremonies? Yes, but it failed. God didn't fail, but people failed. It had failed, for the most part, to capture the minds and hearts of the people. It had become just religious ritual to most, totally meaningless. I believe the Church today is falling into apostasy, where it is immersing itself into religious rituals again, just as what happened to the Jews. God is being worshipped less and less in

spirit and in truth, and more and more the church is turning to pagan religious rituals. People want more ceremony, more physical expression of religion. People are getting into stranger and stranger things and calling it worship.

*"We must worship God as He prescribes or He won't accept it. We can't worship Him any way we choose as long as we're sincere and not hurting anyone else. We can't worship Him the way we want while Muslims worship Him the way they want and Jews worship Him the way they want and Buddhists worship Him the way they want. Jesus said we must worship God as He wants." Anne Graham Lotz*

**John 4:25** The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah is coming" (the one called Christ); "whenever he comes, he will tell us everything."

Wow, this woman was a sinner, even an outcast from the true Jewish faith, but she still knew that the Messiah was coming. Even though the Samaritans only believed in the Torah, was that enough to give them the knowledge of the coming Messiah? Possibly - there are a few prophecies of the Messiah in the Torah. But it's more likely that she had heard from other Jews about the prophecies of the Messiah.

**John 4:26** Jesus said to her, "I, the one speaking to you, am he."

Jesus told her that He was the one she was talking about. Notice how plainly He spoke to her. Jesus would not come out and say something like this to the Jews, because He knew their hearts, and He was carefully waiting until the proper time. He would refer to Himself as the Son of Man. But He didn't have to worry about how the Samaritans would react before the time. He could be open with them.

*"Remarkable...It wasn't within the colonnades of a Roman court that He announced His identity. No, it was in the shade of a well in a rejected land to an ostracized woman. His eyes must have danced as He whispered the secret. "I am the Messiah." . . .Don't miss the drama of the moment. Look at her eyes, wide with amazement. Suddenly the insignificance of her life was swallowed by the significance of the moment. "God is here! God has come! God cares. . .for me!" Max Lucado*

By the way, the "He" at the end of the verse is not in the original Greek text but is added by most translations for clarity, and you may see the word italicized or put in parenthesis in your Bible. So, the verse actually reads "I AM, the one speaking to you." This is the way God named Himself when Moses asked Him His name.

**Exodus 3:14** God said to Moses, "I AM that I AM." And he said, "You must say this to the Israelites, 'I AM has sent me to you.' "

So Jesus is not only claiming to be Messiah, but He appears to be claiming to be God, and He says this again in John 8:58.

**John 4:27** Now at that very moment his disciples came back. They were shocked because he was speaking with a woman. However, no one said, "What do you want?" or "Why are you speaking with her?"

In that time, Orthodox Jews did not speak alone with a woman. Obviously one reason was to keep them from temptation. None of the disciples had the nerve to say anything about it.

**John 4:28-30** Then the woman left her water jar, went off into the town and said to the people, (29) "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Surely he can't be the Messiah, can he?" (30) So they left the town and began coming to him.

So the people in the town even knew about the Messiah. They either had a really good Samaritan teacher of the Torah who saw the Messiah in the Torah, or they had been witnessed to by a Jewish missionary of some kind.

She left her water jar (without ever actually giving Jesus a drink!) - it would have slowed her down as she ran through the town to tell everyone about Jesus. And the least likely person in the town to be saved was used by God to introduce them to Himself. Is there anything you need to leave with Jesus so you can enjoy everything He offers?

**John 4:31-32** Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, "Rabbi, eat something." (32) But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you know nothing about."

Remember that it is still early in the disciples training; they're still in Discipleship 101. They don't really get what Jesus is doing here, not thinking spiritually yet.

**John 4:33-34** So the disciples began to say to one another, "No one brought him anything to eat, did they?" (34) Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of the one who sent me and to complete his work."

What the disciples said makes me laugh. They're just not getting it yet that they need to think spiritually about what Jesus says. Jesus is doing what the Father wants Him to do, reaching out to the Samaritans, and that is spiritual food for Him. It's important to note here that we get fed spiritually not by knowing the will of God, but by doing it.

**John 4:35** Don't you say, 'There are four more months and then comes the harvest?' I tell you, look up and see that the fields are already white for harvest!

This was probably a local saying, farmers have to wait a period of time from when they plant until they can harvest. Jesus is saying that the seed has already been planted, there are people who need the truth, they are thirsty for it, and they are ready to be harvested!

**John 4:36** The one who reaps receives pay and gathers fruit for eternal life, so that the one who sows and the one who reaps can rejoice together.

This is very interesting. He is saying that someone had been sowing good seed among the Samaritans. It could have been John the Baptist or his disciples. Christ is now reaping the results of that good seed being sown!

**John 4:37-38** For in this instance the saying is true, 'One sows and another reaps.' (38) I sent you to reap what you did not work for; others have labored and you have entered into their labor."

Jesus is telling the disciples that someone has come before them and sown the truth, and now they will be reaping that crop that has come up.

**John 4:39-41** Now many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the

**report of the woman who testified, "He told me everything I ever did." (40) So when the Samaritans came to him, they began asking him to stay with them. He stayed there two days, (41) and because of his word many more believed.**

It looks like almost the whole town came to believe in Jesus!

*"For Jesus to lodge there, eating Samaritan food and teaching Samaritans (v. 40) would be roughly equivalent to defying segregation in the United States during the 50's or apartheid in South Africa in the 1980s – shocking, extremely difficult, somewhat dangerous. The Jesus of the Gospels is more concerned with people than with custom. Craig Keener*

**John 4:42** They said to the woman, "No longer do we believe because of your words, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this one really is the Savior of the world."

Where did they get that? Where did they come up with the idea that the Messiah is the Savior of the world? The Jews taught that you had to be a Jew to approach God. Someone had obviously taught them Isaiah 53. It says clearly that He would come as a lamb to die for the sins of the world, that He would legally acquit many, and He would be a substitution for sin.

**John 4:43-44** After the two days he departed from there to Galilee. (44) (For Jesus himself had testified that a prophet has no honor in his own country.)

Of course the irony here is that His own people wouldn't accept Him (John 1:11), but the Samaritans received Him and recognized that He was not only the Jewish Messiah, but the Savior of the world!

**John 4:45** So when he came to Galilee, the Galileans welcomed him because they had seen all the things he had done in Jerusalem at the feast (for they themselves had gone to the feast).

This is probably referring to the signs mentioned in John 2:23 at the Passover. This doesn't contradict the previous verse where it said that He has no honor in His own country. The Samaritans received Christ for who He was - the Savior of the world. The Galileans welcomed Him because of the miracles He had done, but only because of those. It was superficial at best - they did not truly accept Him as Messiah, so the honor that He deserved was not given Him.

**John 4:46-47** Now he came again to Cana in Galilee where he had made the water wine. In Capernaum there was a certain royal official whose son was sick. (47) When he heard that Jesus had come back from Judea to Galilee, he went to him and begged him to come down and heal his son, who was about to die.

This royal official was probably a servant or official of Herod, who was tetrarch (governor) of Galilee under the Romans. The New Testament calls him a king (Matthew 14:9), so the term "royal" is used here. We don't know if he was Jewish or not.

**John 4:48-49** So Jesus said to him, "Unless you people see signs and wonders you will never believe!" (49) "Sir," the official said to him, "come down before my child dies."

It doesn't look like Jesus believes that signs and wonders are a good way to build true faith, which goes against today's "signs and wonders" movements. Like the people in Galilee who believed Him and followed Him for what He could do and do for them (John 2:23-25), not because of who He was, I'm afraid there are many like that today.

**John 4:50-53** Jesus told him, "Go home; your son will live." The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him, and set off for home. (51) While he was on his way down, his slaves met him and told him that his son was going to live. So he asked them the time when his condition began to improve, and they told him, "Yesterday at one o'clock in the afternoon the fever left him." (53) Then the father realized that it was the very time Jesus had said to him, "Your son will live," and he himself believed along with his entire household.

Some denominations such as the Catholic, Lutheran, and Episcopalians, use this verse to prove their doctrine that infants can be saved, that they were somehow saved because the father believed. You can't get that from this verse. It just says that all in the household who were capable of reasoning believed in Jesus because of this healing. It would include everyone in the household, including family and servants, who were old enough to be able to understand and believe.

**John 4:54** Jesus did this as his second miraculous sign when he returned from Judea to Galilee.

This wasn't His second miracle overall, but the second since He had returned to Galilee. Judea was the largest province of Israel, and that's where Jerusalem was located, so it was considered the heart of Israel. To go to Galilee was to go north to where some of the other tribes were located. So here in this chapter, even though Jesus was sent to the Jews, we had many non-Jews coming to faith in Him.

## Chapter 5 – Christ the Deity

This is a key chapter in the book. In this chapter Jesus heals a man who had been ill for 38 years, but He does it on the Sabbath, which makes the Jews furious. This begins a higher level of hostility towards Jesus by the Jews, which ultimately leads to the cross.

In this chapter Jesus becomes more direct with the Jews in His conversations with them. He speaks plainly about His relationship to the Father, claiming to be equal with Him, which the Jews understood as claiming that He was God. Anyone who thinks that Jesus never claimed to be God either has never read this chapter, or like the Jews, simply don't accept what He said.

**John 5:1** After this there was a Jewish feast, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

We don't know how long "after this" was; some think this was the next Passover a year later. In 2:23 He was in Jerusalem at Passover where He did signs. Passover was in the spring. It is more likely that it was Pentecost in the same year, which was 50 days after Passover, but we just don't know for sure.

**John 5:2-4** Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate a pool called Bethzatha in Aramaic, which has five covered walkways. In these lay a multitude of those who were sick, blind, lame, and withered, [waiting for the moving of the waters; (4) for an angel

**of the Lord went down at certain seasons into the pool and stirred up the water; whoever then first, after the stirring up of the water, stepped in was made well from whatever disease with which he was afflicted.] (NASB)**

See the portion of these verses surrounded by the parenthesis? Most scholars today do not accept that section as being authentic, because it is not found in the earliest and best manuscripts. It also uses Greek vocabulary and syntax which is unlike John's writings. You may see this passage marked and noted as such in your Bible, or you may see it left out altogether.

We don't know if anyone ever really got healed at this pool or not, or how the story of the angel got started, but these were people that were desperate to try anything. The pool was called the pool of Bethesda, and archaeologists believe they have found ruins of it underneath the city.

This wasn't a nice clear clean pool of water. It was a long rectangular pool used to clean animals about to be taken to the temple for sacrifice. It was two to three feet deep and generally left pretty filthy. From the edge of the pool down to the water was about twenty to thirty feet, with only one set of stairs down to it. Normally there would be less than three hundred around the pool, but during the feasts there could be two or three thousand sick people there.

**John 5:5-7 Now a man was there who had been disabled for thirty-eight years. (6) When Jesus saw him lying there and when he realized that the man had been disabled a long time already, he said to him, "Do you want to become well?" (7) The sick man answered him, "Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up. While I am trying to get into the water, someone else goes down there before me."**

Notice the man didn't answer Jesus' question, but made excuses. He had been waiting so long for a miracle or an answer to prayer, that his hope was almost gone. You would have thought he would have said "Yes, of course!" straight out.

**John 5:8-9 Jesus said to him, "Stand up! Pick up your mat and walk." (9) Immediately the man was healed, and he picked up his mat and started walking. (Now that day was a Sabbath.)**

Oh, you can see the trouble coming here. He healed someone on the Sabbath, which was considered work, and no work was allowed on the Sabbath day according to Jewish law. So there's going to be some confrontations with the religious leaders. Jesus was not a legalist. He kept the Mosaic Law, but not the Jewish traditions.

**John 5:10 So the Jewish leaders said to the man who had been healed, "It is the Sabbath, and you are not permitted to carry your mat."**

Not only healing was outlawed on the Sabbath, but you weren't supposed to carry anything either, that was work! They probably got this from Jeremiah 17:21-22, but they took what Jeremiah said and carried it too far. **The Sabbath** was a major issue in the conflicts between Jesus and the Jewish leaders (also Mark 2:23; 3:4). The Mosaic Law required that work cease on the seventh day. More laws were added by later Jewish religious authorities, which became very complicated and burdensome. These human traditions missed the point of God's Law. "The Sabbath was made for man" (Mark 2:27) so that he could have rest and a time for worship and joy. The Jews' rigid tradition (not the Old Testament) taught that if anyone carried anything from a public place to a



private place on the Sabbath intentionally, he deserved death by stoning. In this case the man who was healed was in danger of losing his life. So they're not looking at the wonderful miracle that was done, all they can see is their human traditions are being broken.

**John 5:11-13** But he answered them, "The man who made me well said to me, 'Pick up your mat and walk.' " (12) They asked him, "Who is the man who said to you, 'Pick up your mat and walk?'" (13) But the man who had been healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had slipped out, since there was a crowd in that place.

Sometimes you'll see in the gospels Jesus wanting to confront the Jewish leaders, and other times He purposely avoids them, because the time was not right. He's very intentional about this, because He knows that eventually they are going to take Him and have Him killed, but Jesus is not going to let it happen until He has done everything the Father wants Him to do, not until the time is right.

**John 5:14** After this Jesus found him at the temple and said to him, "Look, you have become well. Don't sin any more, lest anything worse happen to you."

This would seem to suggest that whatever disease this man had, it was brought about by his sin. He had done something in his life, maybe repeatedly, that brought on this condition. Jesus was telling him to stop it, or something worse might happen.

**John 5:15-16** The man went away and informed the Jewish leaders that Jesus was the one who had made him well. (16) Now because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jewish leaders began persecuting him.

Again there are two things that the Jewish leaders are getting on Jesus about - He was doing work on the Sabbath by healing, and instructing a man to carry his mat. These men should have been rejoicing and glorifying God to see the Messiah doing these things, but all they could do was condemn. They were spiritually dead, all they could do is see the physical stuff. We have a lot of people like this in the church today - very legalistic. They concentrate on and judge only the physical. Instead of rejoicing in their freedom in Christ, all they can do is condemn others for breaking their traditions.

**John 5:17** So he told them, "My Father is working until now, and I too am working."

The Lord Jesus is taking on the same work of the Father, He is the son of God. I believe Jesus is claiming that He is exempt from the Sabbath requirements about work, because He is God. Even though God may have rested from His creation activities on the 7<sup>th</sup> day, He has never ceased His work. If He did, all nature and life would cease to exist (Hebrews 1:3, Colossians 1:16)! God is actively working at all times; He does not take a break on the Sabbath.

If the Jewish leaders would have recognized who He was, they would not have held Him accountable for breaking the Sabbath laws. Of course the Jewish leaders recognized that God is the only one that has the right to work on the Sabbath, so this statement by Jesus only made them more upset, because He was obviously claiming that He was equal to God:

**John 5:18** For this reason the Jewish leaders were trying even harder to kill him, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was also calling God his own

### **Father, thus making himself equal with God.**

In our culture we don't realize all the implications of sonship. In the ancient cultures, people recognized that the king's son was equal to the king, with all the rights and privileges of His father. We don't really understand that, today we see a son as separate from his father. But in ancient times the fact that the son had come forth from his father made him equal to the father, and that was a very big deal. That idea came from God to begin with. The leaders could not stand the idea that Jesus was calling God His Father.

Next we have a long discourse by Jesus (verse 19-47, the end of the chapter) in response to these Jewish leaders condemning Him for healing this man.

**John 5:19** So Jesus answered them, "I tell you the solemn truth, the Son can do nothing on his own initiative, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, the Son does likewise.

Jesus is purposely taking the opportunity to explain who He is to these people who have gathered. He is speaking directly to them. These verses are some of the strongest passages, apart from chapter 1, on the deity of Christ. Jesus is doing the same things as the Father.

**John 5:20** For the Father loves the Son and shows him everything he does, and will show him greater deeds than these, so that you will be amazed.

Jesus is saying, "If you think this healing was amazing, wait until you see what else the Father will have me do!"

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

Jesus is probably speaking of the future general resurrection of the dead (which the Jews were familiar with) where people will be given their eternal bodies, not just the individual times that He brings someone back to life in their mortal bodies while He was on earth. There were Old Testament prophecies which spoke of a general resurrection (Ezekiel 36-37). So He is saying He will be involved in this future resurrection.

**John 5:22-23** Furthermore, the Father does not judge anyone, but has assigned all judgment to the Son, (23) so that all people will honor the Son just as they honor the Father. The one who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him.

This is an important passage. It tells us that Jesus will probably be the one sitting on the throne at the Great White Throne judgment, not the Father. The Father has given ALL judgment to the Son. It also tells us that Jesus receives the identical honor as the Father. That would be heresy if Jesus was not God.

**John 5:24** "I tell you the solemn truth, the one who hears my message and believes the one who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned, but has crossed over from death to life.

One of the things that strikes me about this verse is that the method of salvation really hasn't

changed since the Old Testament. Jesus is saying that the one who hears His message and **“believes the one who sent me”** has eternal life. People must believe what God says! That’s why Abraham was declared righteous, because He believed what God said. And notice we have eternal life right now, not sometime in the future.

**John 5:25 I tell you the solemn truth, a time is coming — and is now here — when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live.**

So Jesus is saying that there will be a time in the future where the dead who have believed will live again. He also may be speaking spiritually. All of us are dead spiritually until we hear the voice of the Son of God calling us. And if we listen to that voice and answer, we will be spiritually and physically raised to life.

**John 5:26-27 For just as the Father has life in himself, thus he has granted the Son to have life in himself, (27) and he has granted the Son authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man.**

Jesus repeats that the two things that the Jews have always accepted that the Father has the power to do - give life and execute judgment, have now been given to the Son as well.

**John 5:28-29 "Do not be amazed at this, because a time is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice (29) and will come out — the ones who have done what is good to the resurrection resulting in life, and the ones who have done what is evil to the resurrection resulting in condemnation.**

This is the resurrection that Daniel spoke of in Daniel 12:1-3. The Jews would have been very familiar with this terminology. Though this may sound like salvation is by works, it is not. The Greek sense of this passage is that people who are making good, continually doing good, are the ones who will live. They can only do good if they have been born “from above”, as Jesus explained to Nicodemus in chapter 3. This is what they do, what they practice, because they are believers. Believers do not continually do or perpetuate evil.

**John 5:30 I can do nothing on my own initiative. Just as I hear, I judge, and my judgment is just, because I do not seek my own will, but the will of the one who sent me.**

Even though the Son is equal to the Father, there is a line of authority. The Son submits to and obeys the Father’s will.

**John 5:31-32 "If I testify about myself, my testimony is not true. (32) There is another who testifies about me, and I know the testimony he testifies about me is true.**

Jesus admits that if He were the only one testifying about Himself, it would not be enough. But the Father also testifies about Him, as He did when He was baptized by John the Baptist.

**John 5:33-34 You have sent to John, and he has testified to the truth. (34) (I do not accept human testimony, but I say this so that you may be saved.)**

Jesus is not discounting John’s testimony, but going to the higher witness, which is God the Father. Human testimony is not good enough.

**John 5:35-36** He was a lamp that was burning and shining, and you wanted to rejoice greatly for a short time in his light. (36) "But I have a testimony greater than that from John. For the deeds that the Father has assigned me to complete — the deeds I am now doing — testify about me that the Father has sent me.

John the Baptist was a bright light testifying about the Son, but it was only temporary (and John's ministry was about to end), but the Father's testimony is greater, and it is eternal. Jesus is telling these people that these miracles that I am doing should tell you that God has sent me!

**John 5:37-38** And the Father who sent me has himself testified about me. You people have never heard his voice nor seen his form at any time, (38) nor do you have his word residing in you, because you do not believe the one whom he sent.

They have never seen or heard the Father, and they don't even have the knowledge of Him, because they don't believe Jesus. Jesus is telling them, "If you can't believe me, you can't believe Him, and if you can't believe Him, you can't believe me."

**John 5:39-40** You study the scriptures thoroughly because you think in them you possess eternal life, and it is these same scriptures that testify about me, (40) but you are not willing to come to me so that you may have life.

The Jews studied the scriptures, especially the Law, thinking that if they followed them they would have eternal life. The Law was never about giving eternal life. Eternal life comes from having faith, believing God. And they refused to believe God about what He said about the Messiah. The scriptures have the Messiah all throughout, and they missed the whole point of them. The disciples got it:

**John 1:45** Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the law, and the prophets also wrote about — Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."

Surely the religious leaders saw the same things in the scriptures, but they were not willing to accept Jesus as Messiah. They were too wrapped up in their legalism, they thought obeying the Law and all their petty little traditions would save them (not that they were actually able to obey them, which they weren't, they failed in that as well). They were wrapped up in their physical lives, and weren't interested in the spiritual life that Jesus was offering.

**John 5:41-42** "I do not accept praise from people, (42) but I know you, that you do not have the love of God within you.

This can be taken two ways - they don't have a love for God, and they don't have God's love coming out from them. They were cold and dead, no love in them at all.

**John 5:43** I have come in my Father's name, and you do not accept me. If someone else comes in his own name, you will accept him.

Is Christ speaking rhetorically here about someone else, or is He prophesying about the coming antichrist who will someday come in his own name and deceive many?

**John 5:44** How can you believe, if you accept praise from one another and don't seek the praise that comes from the only God?

We should not seek praise from people, but only praise from God. Jesus was basically revealing their true motive for obeying the Law - to gain praise from men. It was a pride issue. It was all a show, they weren't really trying to obey the Law to please God, but to appear religious and godly to other people.

**John 5:45** "Do not suppose that I will accuse you before the Father. The one who accuses you is Moses, in whom you have placed your hope.

Wow, this hurts. They put their hope in Moses, but he will actually be the one who judges them! That really had to get to them, you can almost hear the big sucking sound they would have made, all gasping and choking at what Jesus said! They put Moses up on a pedestal. Jesus will judge them, but He will not be accusing them. Moses will be the one accusing them at the judgment, because they have abused the Law and have not obeyed the spirit of it.

**John 5:46-47** If you believed Moses, you would believe me, because he wrote about me. (47) But if you do not believe what Moses wrote, how will you believe my words?"

Moses wrote about the coming Messiah (Numbers 24:17, Deuteronomy 18:15,18), but obviously they chose not to pay attention to that part. If they really had believed what Moses wrote, they would have realized that law-keeping would not save them. Part of the Law was the fact that they were going to sin, and not be able to keep it perfectly! That's why there is so much attention given in the law to the sacrifices, what to do when you do sin, to get back into fellowship with God. They ignored the whole meaning of the sacrifices, which were there to restore their relationship with God, because the Law showed them that they were failures.

The Law was good, and some of them remain today as things to attain to. But we do not measure our spirituality by keeping the Law, because all it can do is condemn us, not save us. They had some of the silliest rules back then, and still do today. I know of one synagogue (maybe they all do this, I don't know) that hires a Gentile to come in and turn on the lights on Saturday, because they are not allowed to even do that on the Sabbath. It's OK for the Gentile to do it, but the Jewish people are too holy to turn on the light switch, the air conditioning, and the sound system. This is ridiculous; it is abuse of the Law.

Another thing about Moses - Jesus is acknowledging here that Moses wrote about Him, referring to Genesis, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. So-called "higher critics" today like to break up the books of Moses and say they were written by different people. I think I would prefer to believe what Jesus says and not what man says.

Today we have the same problem that Jesus is addressing in verse 47. Many Christians now do not believe the events in Genesis really happened. In this verse Jesus is saying how foolish that is, He believed that Genesis was true literal history. These last words of Jesus in this chapter call out to Christians today - If you don't believe what Moses wrote, then how will you believe what Jesus said?