
The Gospel of John

Part 4 - by: Ronald L. Dart

Of the four Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, it is John, who is the theologian. More than the others, he captures and reports for us the words and deeds of Jesus that tell us who He is and what He is all about.

Jesus Healed A Man on The Sabbath

Jesus had made His way down to the pool of Bethesda and He found a man who had been lame for some 30 years. He healed him and told him to take up his bed and walk. Now this was no special problem, except for one thing, this was the Sabbath day and the fellow rolled up his pallet and was carrying it and Jewish law did not permit that. You couldn't carry any burden on the Sabbath day. Now this is distinct from the Law of Moses which would not have considered something as small as a little pallet a man lays on by a pool as being something wrong to carry. It had to do more with carrying a great bale of hay or something like that.

Now Jesus then having told him to pick up his pallet and walk, the Jews didn't like it, and in John five verse 16, we are told this, "Therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to kill him, because He had done these things on the Sabbath day."

Now notice, we are not talking about censuring Him, it is not talking about criticizing Jesus, or about some theological nicety. They were trying to kill Him.

But Jesus answered them and said, "Look, my Father works, and I work."

I would not have thought this statement was much of a problem, but the Jews listening to Jesus, surely did think it was a problem.

Jesus Claimed That God Was His Father

It says then in verse 18 of John five, "Therefore, the Jews sought the more to kill Him because He not only had broken the Sabbath, but said also that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God."

Now do you remember how John started his gospel? Do you recall that he identified Jesus with the Word and then said plainly that "The Word was with God and the Word was God." John clearly understood that Jesus was making Himself equal with God, and the Jews who heard Jesus

say what He said, thought that Jesus was making Himself equal with God. So let's get this straight, Jesus came along, claiming to be equal with God.

This is what C.S. Lewis is talking about when he says, "It is foolish for people to start talking about Jesus as being merely a great teacher. He couldn't possibly have been just another great teacher. Either He was who He said He was, or He was a flaming maniac."

"Then Jesus answered and said to them, {19} "I'll tell you the truth, The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do, for whatever things He does, these things does the Son likewise, {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."

You have seen this fellow who was lame for over 30 years. You all know him. You have been down by the pool and you have seen him lying there and look at him now. He can get up, he can walk. He can dance. He can do anything he wants to do. How do you think this happened? I can't do anything of Myself. I can only do what I see my Father do.

Continuing in verse 21, "Just as God raised up the dead and quickens them. Even so, the Son quickens whom He will."

Now that is an astonishing claim, because He goes on to say that God can raise the dead, can't He? So, can the Son, whoever He wishes.

All Judgment Has Been Committed to The Son

John 6 verse 23, "For the Father judges no man, but has committed all judgment to the Son, that all men should honor the Son just like they honor the Father. He that honors not the Son, honors not the Father who sent Him, {24} I tell you the truth, he that hears my word," Jesus is speaking now, "and believes on Him that sent Me, has everlasting life, and shall not come to condemnation, but is passed from death to life."

This is all pretty heavy for a Jew listening at that time because He says that the Father has committed all judgment to the Son. This man Jesus, that they are there trying to kill, on this occasion, is the one who is going to judge them in the end.

"Verily I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live."

Now I am not trying to put too fine of point on this, but notice what He is saying, "We are now in a generation when the dead can hear, the voice, not of the Father, but of the Son of God and live, because of His voice."

Now what do you mean, "now is," I thought the resurrection was off in the future. Well, yes, it is, but at the same time, Jesus, very shortly, is going to go to the tomb where a man has been lying dead for four days and bring him back to life.

Continuing in verse 26, "For the Father has life in Himself, and so He has given to the Son, to have life in Himself."

Which means that life is not dependent on anyone or anything else. It comes right out of Him Himself.

"And He (God the Father) has given Him (Jesus) authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man."

He is the Son of God. He is the Son of Man. It seems that this being the Son of Man conveys an authority to execute judgment above and beyond, are different from or in addition to, being the Son of God. Why would that be? Well, perhaps it's because, having lived in the flesh He understands the flesh, the problems of the flesh, and is better positioned in our eyes to execute judgment than otherwise He might be.

Two Resurrections

Jesus said in verse 28 of John 5, "Do not marvel at this, for the hour is coming, in which all that are in their graves shall hear His voice, {29} And shall come forth, they that have done good to the resurrection of life, they that have done evil to the resurrection of damnation."

Now did you notice something interesting here? What Jesus reveals to us at this occasion is that there are not one, but two resurrections. One to life. One to damnation or probably better put, to judgment. That is a sobering concept. But what is even more sobering is, it is those that have done good and those that have done evil that are judged to be so. It is not merely a matter of, professing Christ or professing a religion or saying "I am a Catholic. I am a Baptist. I'm a Presbyterian, I am this. I am that."

It is a matter of what you have done that has an effect on which resurrection, you wind up in. One to life or one to judgment. Now there's a lot of theology out there, on what these resurrections mean, what judgment is, the judgment day and resurrections. I will leave it to you to track that down if you're really interested in following it, but it was pretty simple here.

There are two, one to life and one to death, and how you live your life has something to do with which one of them you are going to be in. That's what Jesus has just said, and we would do well to adapt our theology to what Jesus has just said.

If I Bear Witness of Myself My Witness Is Not True

Jesus continues in John 5 verse 30, "I can of my own self do nothing, as I hear, I judge, and my judgment is just, because I'm not seeking my own will, but the will of my Father who has sent me. {31} If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true. {32} There is another that bears witness of me, and I know that the witnesses which is witnessed of me is true."

Now there is a small problem here, because it is just a problem of language or figure of speech.

Jesus said, "If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true." What He means by that is in law, testifying of yourself is not good enough. You need an external impartial witness to whatever it is that you have done. Testifying and witnesses are crucial in the law of God, and the whole complex of God's will for man, and His approach to man. Witnesses have to tell you what happened.

For Jesus Himself to write His own book, for Jesus Himself to tell us what this is, and what He has done is not enough. There is a need for witnesses to bear testimony to what He did, and what He has done.

The first of them was John. ""You have sent to John and he has testified to the truth, {34} Not that I accept human testimony; but I mention it that you may be saved. {35} He was a burning and shining light and you were willing for a while to rejoice in His life."

You listen to John and say "Wow, he is a good preacher. Yes, that man has a lot of truth. I enjoy hearing what he has to say." Problem is, when John testified as to who Jesus was, they didn't want to hear it.

Jesus said, {36} "I have a greater witness than that of John, for the works which the Father has given Me to finish, the same works I do bear witness of me, that the Father has sent me."

I have a better witness than John. John told you and you believed him up to a point, but I have got this man, who was now walking, who couldn't walk before, who testifies of Me.

"All these works testify that the Father, has sent me, and has borne witness of me. You have neither heard His voice at any time, nor have you seen his shape and you have not His word abiding in you. {38} You don't have God's word in you."

You seem to think that you have God's word in you, but you don't have it because, "You don't believe the one God has sent. {39} Search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life and those same Scriptures are they which testify of me. {40} You will not come to me, that you might have life and yet the Scriptures where you think you have eternal life, tell you that it's in Me. {41} I receive not honor from men. {42} But I know you, that you have not the love of God in you."

That's really pretty obvious isn't it? They have not the love of God in them, because Jesus who came down and healed a man who had been crippled for years and years and years, they wanted to kill.

"I am come in my Father's name, and you will not have it." {43} "Another man could come in his own name and you would have him." You would listen to him. {44} "How can you believe, who receive honor one of another."

You pat one another on the back and are proud of one another but "You seek not the honor that comes from God alone? {45} Don't think that I will accuse you to the Father. There's one that

already accuses you, Moses, in whom you trust. {46} If you had believed Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote of Me."

Jesus' criticism of these men is devastating, because what He is saying plainly is that the religion that these men professed, the religion that they practiced day in and day out, with all their fasting, all their worship and all of the restrictions and all their rules, Moses would never have accepted.

Verse 47, "If you will not believe Moses writings, how are you going believe My words."

You know it is a small wonder they hated Jesus, there was no room for middle ground here. To the Jewish leadership Jesus' words were blasphemous! To those who believed they were life itself.

Five Barley Loaves and Two Little Fish

"After these things Jesus went over the Sea of Galilee, which is the sea of Tiberius." This is John chapter 6 verse one. {2} "And a huge crowd followed Him because they saw His miracles that He did on people who were diseased."

I guess they would. Jesus was a remarkable man.

"Jesus went up into a mountain," {3} "Where He sat with His disciples. {4} It was not long before the Passover, a feast of the Jews, that was coming up {5} Now when Jesus lifted up His eyes, He saw a great company coming up the hill to Him and He said to Philip, "Where in the world are we going to get bread so these people can eat." {6} He said this to test Philip, because He knew what He was going to do."

He wanted to know whether Philip was really up to speed or not.

"Philip answered Him, "Six months' wages would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little." {8} One of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother said to Him, {9} "There's a lad here, who has five barley loaves, and two little fish, but what are they among so many?" [10] Jesus said, "Have the men sit down." Now there was a lot of grass where they were. So, the men sat down, and the number was about 5000."

This is mind-boggling to think that that many people would've followed Jesus up to this remote place without enough food to eat or anything else with them.

The people sat down, {11} "And Jesus took the loaves, and when He had given thanks, He distributed to the disciples and they gave them to them that had sat down and the fish as much as they wanted. {12} And when everybody had plenty to eat, He said to the disciples, "Gather up the fragments that remain so nothing is lost." {13} They gathered them together and filled 12 baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves that remained over and above them that had eaten."

Now that's really shocking and there seems to be a point here that we don't want to make a mistake and think that each person ate just a tiny bit of food and they were all satisfied with it. No, no, He multiplied the food on this occasion. Why in the world would He do that? Well, because He could, and that is not a bad reason I suppose, but Jesus was hospitable. These people had come to hear Him and hospitality would require that He give them something to eat and so he did.

A Second Moses

John 6 verse 14, "Those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, "This is of a truth the prophet that should come into the world." {15} When Jesus perceived that they would come and take Him by force, to make Him a king, He departed from there to the mountain by Himself to be alone."

Now in Deuteronomy 18 verse 15, there is this little statement, and this is from Moses to the Israelites. He says, "The LORD your God will raise up unto you a prophet from the midst of you of your brethren likened to me, unto Him you shall hear."

What these people thought when they saw what Jesus was doing, He was a kind of second Moses and the Messiah was to be something of that nature. This was going to be a powerful leader for Israel who would, and figuratively speaking, take them out of Egypt and bring them into the promised land or in this case throw the Romans out and establish the kingdom of God, here, now on the earth.

When Jesus saw what was coming down in their minds, He got away from them.

Jesus Walking on The Water

"And when evening came, Jesus' disciples went down to the sea." They didn't know where He was either. We are back in the book of John chapter 6 and verse 17, "They entered into a boat and started back across the sea going toward Capernaum. It was now dark, and Jesus had not joined them. {18} And the sea began to get rough and a gale came across the lake {19} and when they had rowed twenty-five or thirty furlongs, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and drawing near to the boat." (This scared them half to death.) {20} "He called out to them saying, "It's me, don't be afraid," {21} So they willingly received him into the boat and immediately the boat was at land where they were going."

I don't know how to take this, but we do know from other accounts that the sea was suddenly calm. Jesus was there, and everything was all right.

Everlasting Life

John 6 verse 22, "The day following" the people that were on the other side of the sea saw that there was no other boat there, except the one that the disciples entered, and Jesus was not with His disciples in the boat. They had gone away alone, and they didn't know where He was. {23} But there were some other boats from Tiberius that came there, near the place where they ate

bread after the Lord had given thanks; {24} When the people therefore saw that Jesus was not there, nor His disciples, they also got into boats and came to Capernaum, looking for Jesus. {25} The people finally found Jesus on the other side and said, "Rabbi, when did you come over here?" {26} Jesus ignored the question and said, "I tell you the truth, you're looking for Me, not because you saw the miracles, but because you ate the bread and were filled . {27} You people need to learn not to labor for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man shall give to you, for Him God the Father has sealed."

Now right here Jesus is setting a theme for what is going to follow in his discourse with these people. The realization is, the meat that endures to everlasting life. It's about living forever. That's what this whole section is about.

"Then they said to Him, "What shall we do that we might work the works of God?" {29} Jesus said, "This is the work of God, that you believe on Him whom He has sent.""

God Sent Jesus and He Was God in The Flesh

And here is where the struggle begins in the soul of every man. Believing Jesus, that God sent Him and that He was God in the flesh.

We are going to have this again and again in this short section that we are reading through here. Jesus was sent down here by God, and that He was God in the flesh. Now don't be foolish and assume that means all you have to do is profess Christ and then do as you please. Jesus will make it very clear that He intends to make great demands on your life and on your work, but if you don't start here, believing that Jesus is the Son of God, and He was sent down here by God. If you don't believe that, you have nowhere to go and all your works are pointless.

John 6 verse 30, "They said therefore to Him, "What sign will You show us that we may see and believe you? What works are You going to do? {31} Our fathers ate manna in the desert, as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat.""

Their heads are still on their bellies. It's incredible, what Jesus has done, what He has told them and all they can think about here is food.

"Jesus said to them, "Verily I say unto you, Moses did not give you that bread from heaven. Moses gave you no food. My Father gives you the true bread from heaven, for the bread of God is He which came down from heaven and gives life to the world.""

Do realize what Jesus has just said? He is talking about Himself plainly. He is the bread of God, who comes down from heaven. He didn't originate on this planet. He came here from above.

"They said to Him," {34} "Lord, give us this bread from now on." {35} And Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life, he that comes to me shall never hunger, he that believes on me shall never thirst. I am the bread, I am the bread of God. I am the bread of God which came down from heaven.""

Now do you see what I mean, when I talk about John being the theologian who is telling us, who Christ is, what He is, where He came from, what He's doing? This is all a part of what theologians call Christology. Who is this man Jesus Christ, who makes a claim that He actually came down from God?

Jesus Came Down from Heaven

"I said unto you," Jesus said, "You have seen me, and you don't believe." Let's continue in John 6 verse 37, "All that the Father gives Me that come to me and him that comes to me, I will in no wise cast out, {38} For I came down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of Him that sent Me."

This is one of the things you have to believe, that Jesus came down from heaven. He says, "I came down from heaven." Do you believe that? If you don't, we don't have anything to talk about. It's over! If all you think is that Jesus was just a great teacher, then you are mistaken. Jesus claimed to have come down from heaven! If He didn't, then He was either a liar or a madman. There are people who call themselves Christians, who do not believe this. A lot of the people who were there on this occasion were His disciples and they didn't believe this, that Jesus came down from heaven.

He says in verse 39, ""This is the Father's will, who sent me, of all that He has given Me, I should lose nothing, but I should raise it up again at the last day {40} And this is the will of Him that sent me that everyone that sees the Son and believes on Him may have everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day." {41} The Jews then murmured at Him because He said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven.""

They just couldn't handle it. Many of those people sitting there, listening to Him talk, couldn't believe. They couldn't accept it.

They said, {42} "Isn't this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can He say "I came down from heaven?" When He was born right over there in Bethlehem. Jesus therefore answered and said to them, {43} "Murmur not among yourselves, {44} Don't let yourself worry about this, no man can come to me, except the Father which sent me draw him and I will raise him up at the last day. {45} It is written in the prophets, "They shall all be taught of God. Every man therefore that has heard and has learned of the Father, comes to me.""

What He is saying is simply this, all these things were written before, all you Jews standing, listening to Me, all of you who have heard and learned of the Father, you have read the Scriptures, you believe the Scriptures, you have obeyed them, you follow God, and you looked for what God said was coming. You come to me freely.

Verse 46, "Not that any man has seen the Father, save He which is of God, He has seen the Father."

What He is basically saying is that no human being has ever seen the Father, only Jesus who was with God has seen the Father.

"Verily I say unto you," {47} "He that believes me has everlasting life. {48} I am that bread of life. {49} Your fathers ate manna in the desert, and they died. {50} This is the bread that comes down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof and not die. {51} I am the living bread which came down from heaven, if any man eat of this bread. He will live forever, and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.""

The metaphor, bread, is so rich that we have here, and it is so hard for people to get their mind around. Many Jews had a better basis in some ways for understanding it than perhaps we do, but it was still tough for them.

"The Jews argued amongst themselves, "How can this man give us His flesh to eat?" {53} Then Jesus said, "Except you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and unless you drink His blood, you have no life in you. {54} Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. {55} For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed, {56} He that eats my flesh, and drinks my blood, dwells in me and I in him.""

Blood Covenant

What Jesus is doing on this occasion is talking about a blood covenant. Something that should be familiar to all the people who were there. In ancient times you would sometimes drink a little bit of the blood of another man and he yours. In the process they would enter into a relationship with one another that previously did not exist. They became blood brothers.

What Jesus is talking about is symbolically, partaking of His blood and His flesh and becoming a blood brother with Him.

Verse 57 of John 6, "As the living Father sent me and I live by the Father, so he that eats me, even he shall live by Me. {58} This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like your fathers who ate manna and are dead. He that eats of this bread shall live forever." {59} He said these things actually in the synagogue, as He taught in Capernaum {60} And many of His disciples, when they heard this said, "This is a hard saying," {61} Jesus replied, "You haven't seen anything yet!" {66} but from that time, many of His disciples went back and walked no more with Him."

The late Ronald L. Dart was a Christian evangelist whose teachings still inspire thousands of people around the world. His legacy spans decades. For more information about the teachings of Ronald L. Dart, visit RLDEA.com where you will find booklets, articles, sermons, Bible studies, and books by Mr. Dart.

Discussion Questions

1. Do you agree with Mr. Dart's point that there are two resurrections, one to life and one to death?
2. Do you also agree with the point that it matters how you live as to which resurrection you will be in? Why or why not?
3. Is it interesting that there are four witness accounts in our Bible about Jesus and His life as a human? He didn't just have two books about Him; He doubled the required 'witnesses'.
4. What do you think went through the minds of the people when Jesus multiplied the food?
5. What other times did God increase the amount of substances?
6. Can you sympathize with the people that could only think of food?
7. Are there times in your life that the desire for temporary relief from a trial nearly overpowered you from seeking first the Kingdom of God?
8. Have there been times, though, where despite the trials you were going through, your faith helped make you strong?
9. What convinced you that Jesus came down from Heaven, was made flesh, lived, died, and was resurrected for us?
10. How can you now aid others to believe in Jesus?