

St. Athanasius Academy of Orthodox Theology

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Home of the Orthodox Study Bible: Septuagint Old Testament and New Testament

APRIL 2010

Dear Friend of St. Athanasius Academy:

In love of our newly departed Fr. Jack and his eternal remembrance, we offer a teaching from an upcoming Academy booklet on the Gospel of John. This seems appropriate during the Paschal season, as we celebrate our being set free from the fear of death; learning, by faith, to live in the hope of the Resurrection and His promise of the world to come.

JESUS' WORDS PROVE HE CLAIMS TO BE EQUAL WITH THE FATHER (5:21-23)



5:21 "For as the Father raises the dead and causes them to live, so also the Son causes to live whom he will. 22 for the Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son, 23 that all should honor the Son, as they honor the Father who sent him. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him."

1. The words He spoke in verses 21-23 interpret the meaning of the words He spoke in verses 19-20: "can do nothing from Himself," and "shows Him all things He is doing," and "will show Him greater works." For He can do something from Himself; in fact, He can do anything He wills to do. For He is equal in power and authority with the Father. The words "raises the dead" show the same power, and "whom He will," the same authority. This is how the words spoken in verses 19-21 are to be interpreted.

2. Therefore Jesus did not receive an inward power from the Father to do the works He performed. Rather, He did His works by His own inherent power and authority, which are coequal with and the same as the power and authority of the Father. The words "just as" in verses 21 and 23 also emphasize this equality and sameness.

3. For example in John 11:25, He says to Lazarus, being four days dead: "Lazarus, come forth" (John 11:43). He did not say: "In the name of the Father, come forth," as though only the Father had this power and authority. For He Himself raised him from the dead, and the Father raised him as well, for Their power and authority are one and the same.

4. Therefore all should honor the Son's equality with the Father. Whoever refuses to do this does not honor the Father. The Jews themselves refused to honor the Son in this way, but chose another way of honor. Their way, and the way of all who do the same, is called vainglory or self-glorification. For they sought the honor that came from one another, and not God's (John 5:44).

5. They also "loved the praise of men more than the praise of God" (John 12:43). But let us avoid this false way of honor with all zeal and earnestness. For although we may have ten thousand good qualities, this plague of vainglory is sufficient to bring them all to nothing. Let us then seek only the praise of God.

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6. Furthermore, the words "has given" in the statement, "has given all judgment to the Son," relate to the Son as the Only-begotten of the Father. For just as the Father gave the Son life in His begottenness from the Father before all time and ages, even so He gave Him all judgment in this begottenness. For the Son is one in essence with the Father. Therefore the Son is coming again either to punish or else to honor people, for He is the judge of all. Let us then live in godly virtue each day in anticipation of His awesome judgment seat.

7. In summary, Jesus said in 5:17: "My Father works until now, and I work until now," thus establishing His equality with the Father. Then the Jews sought to kill Him; therefore, He varied His teaching by speaking in a more humble tone in 5:19-20, but with the same meaning as in 5:17, so as to turn away their wrath. For He wanted to save them, if possible.

8. So He speaks at one time in a high manner, and another in a low. He mixes His teaching this way in an attempt to draw them over to the truth. He can mix His teaching like this, because He is God, and can speak in a condescending way at one time, and in a high manner at another. But if He were merely a man, which is not the case, and yet spoke in this manner of mixing, he would be guilty of the greatest arrogance.

9. We are therefore able to assign a reason for the lowly expressions, a reason sufficient and becoming to God, namely, His condescension, His teaching us to be humble, and the salvation which He brought about for us.

10. Why did Jesus say the Father had "sent Him"? This was said for no other purpose than to show His high Parentage from the Father and equality with Him, and therefore, is not the Father's enemy, as the Jews thought. He further develops this promise in 5:24

[JESUS SPEAKS OF ETERNAL LIFE AND ETERNAL DEATH \(5:24\)](#)

24 "Truly, truly I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has eternal life, and he shall not come into judgment, but passes from death into life."

In His Hope and Peace.

Sincerely,



Paul Goetz for St. Athanasius Academy

The Orthodox faith – its philosophical and theological teachings – as handed down by the Apostles, confirmed by Holy Scripture, the Seven Ecumenical Councils, and lived by His Church, the guidepost to the:

OSB: OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT

Help us honor the work of
FR. JACK SPARKS,
of eternal remembrance.

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