

DECLARATION OF DEITY

30 "I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge, and my judgment is just, because I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me. 31 If I alone bear witness about myself, my testimony is not true. 32 There is another who bears witness about me, and I know that the testimony that he bears about me is true. 33 You sent to John, and he has borne witness to the truth. 34 Not that the testimony that I receive is from man, but I say these things so that you may be saved. 35 He was a burning and shining lamp, and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light. 36 But the testimony that I have is greater than that of John. For the works that the Father has given me to accomplish, the very works that I am doing, bear witness about me that the Father has sent me. 37 And the Father who sent me has himself borne witness about me. His voice you have never heard, his form you have never seen, 38 and you do not have his word abiding in you, for you do not believe the one whom he has sent.

Introduction

1. There is a place for presenting evidence for truth. It's important to lay out the case, to prove the issue with facts. But for some, regardless of the weight of proof, the evidence will be discarded. Their mind is already made up and they will not change regardless of facts presented. (Present a color blotch – "What color is this? "Blue." Hold the blotch to the sky – "Is this blotch the same color as the sky right now? "Yes." "Therefore, the sky is blue." "No, the sky is gray." That is often what it feels like to argue theology with people – especially the deity of Christ to people who have decided He is not God. Regardless of what you might present they reject the evidence. That's what we have in this passage.
2. Jesus is building His case that He is God – equal with the Father, full deity. Actually that is what this whole Gospel is about. (It is reasonable to suggest that the four Gospels each have a target audience in mind and a specific agenda in place. I would argue that Matthew was written to the Jews demonstrating that Jesus is the King of all creation. Mark made the case that Jesus came as a servant. Luke's emphasis was to show us the humanity of Jesus. Often he refers to Jesus as the Son of man. Even the genealogy he presents traces Jesus back to Adam, connecting Him to the human race. John's emphasis was Jesus' deity. "These are written that

you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God – and that believing you might have life through His name”). So John’s Gospel is declaring that Jesus is God.

3. Beginning in John 5:17, Jesus clearly proclaims Himself to be God – equal with the Father – of the same essence as the Father. In a phrase, Jesus is God! Among other things, it is necessary that Jesus is God in order for us to have salvation. Note the last half of verse 34 - **but I say these things so that you may be saved**. But just saying these things does not result in people being saved. Only if we believe who He is and embrace Him by faith can we be saved. That was the condition of the religious leaders in Jesus’ day. They saw Him. They heard Him. They watched Him do the works of God that no one else could do. But when He declared Himself to be God, they said, “No you’re not!” (The sky is gray)!
4. Kids, this passage from the Bible is sort of like a court of law where a lawyer is presenting to the jury evidence to make his case and hopefully to convince the jury members that his case is true. He brings witnesses. Suppose the case was to prove the guilt of someone charged with being a thief. The first witness called testifies that the accused had the opportunity to commit the crime. The second witness called to the stand testifies that the accused had a motive to commit the crime. Finally a third witness comes forward as an eyewitness who saw the person commit robbery! This is not about a crime, but it is about a claim. Jesus is claiming that He is God and He brings some witnesses forward to affirm His claim. I want you to identify **three** of those **witnesses (Jesus, John, and God the Father - I will also accept the Word)**.

I. THE TESTIMONY REGARDING JESUS – WHO HE IS (30-37a)

A. “I’m God – I say so!” (Jesus as the first witness)

1. At first glance, some might assume that Jesus is not claiming to be deity in verses 30-31. But if He’s the second person of the triune God this would make sense. He is operating fully in harmony with the Father, who sent Him in the first place. All the judgments made by Jesus are righteous, in perfect harmony with the Father’s will. Who but God could make such a claim?
2. Any of the three persons in the Godhead would never act independently of the others; in fact, that would be an impossible scenario. God is never at odds with Himself! That’s why Jesus is saying in verse 31 - **If I alone bear witness about myself, my testimony is not true**. His testimony of Himself could never contradict

the testimony of the Spirit or of the Father. This is a restatement of verses 20-21 particularly applied to the issue of judgment. The three persons of the Trinity all bear witness to the deity of each member. If Jesus is not God, this makes no sense. But He is declaring that the Father bears witness that Jesus is God.

3. Some think Jesus is speaking of John the Baptist in verse 32 (***There is another who bears witness about me, and I know that the testimony that he bears about me is true***) because verse 33 speaks specifically of John, but in view of what Jesus said in verses 30-31, He seems to be speaking of the Father, and He will pick up the remainder of that portion of the argument later in this text. Jesus declares Himself to be God and He claims that the Father affirms His declaration. So, Jesus says, ***“I’m God! I say so!”*** Jesus’ testimony continues with a second witness...

B. “I’m God – John the Baptist says so”

1. Early in the Gospel we were introduced to John the Baptist. John came to bear witness to the one who was coming, the Messiah, the God-man. ²⁹ ***The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! ³⁰This is he of whom I said, ‘After me comes a man who ranks before me, because he was before me.’ ³¹I myself did not know him, but for this purpose I came baptizing with water, that he might be revealed to Israel.” ³²And John bore witness: “I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. ³³I myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’ ³⁴And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God.”*** John had done his job well. He affirmed what he believed to be true. Jesus is God!
2. Jesus was not appealing to a human witness as His only source or even best source for proving His deity. In fact, for Jesus, the Father’s testimony is all that’s needed, but for the sake of His hearers, that they might understand and be saved, Jesus introduces John testimony. John never claimed to be the light but gave witness to the light that the true light had come into their midst – and that true light was Jesus. So Jesus said, “I am God” based on His own testimony. And then He said, “I am God” based on John’s testimony. Now, what was briefly

introduced is brought front and center, a testimony that far outweighs John's testimony...

C. "I'm God – the Father says so!"

1. **"All that Jesus does is nothing more and nothing less than what the Father gives him to do. The works he does are thus peculiarly divine; they are the works of God. Once the Father/Son relationship is grasped, everything Jesus does simultaneously attests who he is and who the Father is"** (Carson, p. 262). That's true, but the religious leaders were struggling with the identity of Jesus and the identity of the Father!
2. Having been sent by the Father, and doing all that the Father had given the Son to do, says of the Father that Jesus is God! And the people had seen and would continue to see those works including miracles and His death and resurrection. In Jesus' words, **And the Father who sent me has himself borne witness about me.**
3. Why is it so important to believe that Jesus is God? If He is not God, then He lied to us about His coming and about what He would do for us. If He is not God we remain in our sins without redemption. If He is not God He has no authority to grant us eternal life and no power to actually do it. It is crucial – that's why we are taking our time to work through this chapter. This is pivotal. Now that Jesus has brought forward these witnesses, how will the jury render the verdict? What do you think?

II. THE RESPONSE OF THE PEOPLE – WHY THE EVIDENCE DIDN'T MATTER (37b-38) The people had a history of rejecting God's evidence of His identity!

A. Rejected His past revelation

1. It's not entirely clear to what specifically John is referring, but surely throughout history God the Father had been bearing witness about Himself and His Son.
2. In the lifetimes of these hearers, they had heard the OT texts; they had seen or at least heard of Jesus miraculous power unleashed in the name of God. They were hearing even in the most recent past Jesus' defense that He was the Son of God, human and divine. What would they do with such revelation from God? Here's the indictment: **His voice you have never heard, his form you have never seen, ³⁸ and you do not have his word abiding in you, for you do not believe the one whom he has sent.**

3. There's the indictment! "You have rejected every form of revelation I have given you. And now my final revelation, My Own Son, and you have rejected Him also! **"Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, ² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. ³ He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power"** (Hebrews 1:1-3a).

B. Rejected His present visitation (the proof and verdict)

1. You have never heard His voice... The one who had given them the Law, Moses, had heard the voice of God and had made the voice of God known to them. Now here is Jesus speaking the words of God and they fail to hear the voice of God in Him. It turns out in verses 45-47 that Moses actually becomes their accuser! If they had truly listened to Moses, they would have "heard Jesus", for Moses spoke of Jesus. Thus Jesus makes the case against them that they never heard the voice of God!

2. You have never seen His form... Do you remember the story of the patriarch Jacob? Jacob wrestled with God. That story was well known to the Jews. There were other "theophanies in the OT – appearance of God, but they failed to see it in Scripture. Here now is Jesus, who is the very image of God, but they failed to see God in Jesus. Failing to see God in Jesus was an indictment against them. Finally Jesus says...

3. His Word does not dwell in you...Certainly the Jews knew well the stories of Joshua, Moses successor, who as he made ready the children of Israel to possess the Promise Land, said, **"This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."** These leaders would have been familiar with Psalm 119:11 - ***I have stored up (hidden) your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.*** But here is Jesus, the very Word of God and these Jews have no regard for Him! They reject Him. He's not God, they say. He can't be!

4. The verdict... **“You do not believe the one whom he has sent.”**

Conclusion

1. Once Jesus makes the declaration that He is God and brings out the evidence to prove His claim, and the people decide to reject the evidence, now what? They have to get rid of Him. They have to silence Him. They have to keep others from exposure to these claims. He will have to be put to death. So we have begun the unwrapping of the inevitable conclusion to Jesus' life. Things will reach a crisis in chapter 6. The hostility will continue to grow through chapter 12 making it necessary for Jesus to retreat with His disciples away from constant danger, eventually ending in the Upper Room (13-17). And then He is arrested, tried and crucified. The crime for which He was condemned – He claimed to God! He was God!
2. Years after this, the Apostle John would write this indictment (1 John 5:9-10) – ***9 If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater, for this is the testimony of God that he has borne concerning his Son. 10 Whoever believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself. Whoever does not believe God has made him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has borne concerning his Son. And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.*** What do we do with this passage?
3. I have to ask, “Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ? Are you saved? Do you realize who He is and what He has done and are you trusting in Him and in Him alone to cleanse you of sin and give you eternal life?”
4. On a scale of 1-10 (1 being the lowest and 10 the greatest in importance) how does Jesus really rank in your life daily?
5. Sometime this week try writing out your testimony of your experience as you trusted in Christ. Share it with someone you know.