

*“The True Authority”*

The Subject of **Authority and Relationships** has frequently been raised in the news during the past few weeks, especially in connection with the National Football League and Domestic Violence or in the reports about the authorization for going to War in Iraq and Syria against the ISIL Terrorist group or with reference to the upcoming elections and how elected officials use or fail to use their authority for the welfare of their constituents. The Authority of the Church or of any other Institution or Official repeatedly faces challenges in our society.

Today’s Text continues the confrontation between Jesus and the Jewish authorities over the issue of his authority and his relationship with God, which was reported last week in John 5:1-18. Many biblical scholars reject the whole idea of the Gospel of John providing a true and authentic report of what Jesus said to the Jewish authorities. **So, we have a question about the authority of the Gospel of John on the subject of Jesus’ authority.**

Some of those scholars say the Gospel of John was a theological construction, which used a Signs Source and a Discourse Source. They say this Scripture is from the Discourse Source, which is not based on an eyewitness testimony.

Instead, as I pointed out last Sunday, the Gospel of John is much more accurate than the Synoptic gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke in many of the details about Jesus’ Ministry, Death, and Resurrection. Further, I agree with John A.T. Robinson, who wrote the book, The Priority of John. Grady Quick provided me this copy of that book over 10 years ago. Robinson concluded the discourses in the Gospel of John are what Jesus said as recalled by an eyewitness. Richard Bauckham, who is an expert about the characteristics of ancient biographies, wrote the book, The Testimony of the Beloved Disciple: Narrative, History, and Theology in the Gospel of John. Bauckham states in it, “My own present contribution to this matter is chapter 4 below, which breaks new ground by comparing the Gospel with the characteristics of good historiographical method, as generally recognized in the Greco-Roman world, and showing that, however surprising this may be in light of most scholarly evaluations of the Gospel of John, it would have looked to contemporaries more like historiography than the Synoptics would have done.”

**Now, let’s examine what Jesus said about his authority and his special relationship with the Divine Parent.** Last week, John 5:17 reported Jesus said, *“My Father is always working, and I too must work.”*

The Gospel of John went on to state in 5:18, *“This saying made the Jewish authorities all the more determined to kill him; not only had he broken the Sabbath law, but he had said that God was His own Father and in this way had made himself equal with God.”* The Jewish authorities were upset because Jesus claimed an authority eclipsing their own, one which included a special relationship with God.

Indeed, Jesus emphasized his **relationship with God and how from that special relationship he was given great authority** in vs. 19-23. He then restated his argument again in vs. 24-29.

Each of those two sections begin with Jesus saying the reduplicated, *“Amen, Amen”*, which the TEV version – our pew Bibles, translates as, *“I am telling you the truth.”* This use of *“Amen”* tends to indicate the report comes from an early source.

Jesus said in vs. 19, *“I tell you the truth: the Son can do nothing on his own; he does only what he sees his Father doing. What the Father does, the Son also does.”* The source of Jesus’ power and

authority is the Divine Parent for Jesus is the Son!

Jesus went on to disclose in vs. 20, *“For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that He Himself is doing. He will show him even greater things to do than this (the healing of the man who was sick for 38 years), and you will all be amazed.”* What was Jesus talking about – what were the amazing things he would do?

There are ways to test Jesus’ assertion. Did Jesus do things only God had done? All four gospels report Jesus did miraculous things. Did an agent of God affirmed Jesus’ claims?

Later in chapter 5 – which was quoted in today’s Call To Worship, Jesus reminded his antagonists of John the Baptist’s testimony. In vs. 32-33 he said, *“But there is someone else who testifies on my behalf, and I know that what he says about me is true. John is the one to whom you sent your messengers, and he spoke on behalf of the truth.”*

With those comments, Jesus claimed John the Baptist had testified about him to their messengers in John 1:19-34. Indeed, some of the Baptist’s disciples, who witnessed John’s testimony about Jesus, were among Jesus’ original disciples, so he had ready witnesses to back up his claim of the Baptist’s testimony. As also reported in the Synoptics, the Baptizer announced he was *“not good enough to untie”* Jesus’ sandals! Additionally, those former disciples of the Baptist, who were with Jesus, knew John further revealed Jesus is the *“Lamb of God”*, and Jesus is the *“Son of God.”*

Also, just beyond our Scripture Reading, Jesus said in John 5:36-37, *“But I have a witness on my behalf which is even greater than the witness that John gave: what I do, that is, the deeds my Father gave me to do, these speak on my behalf and show that the Father has sent me. And the Father, Who sent me, also testifies on my behalf.”*

Jesus was pointing ahead to what would be the most powerful testimony about his authority and relationship with God. He went on to share an example of what he was talking about in John 5:21, *“Just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, in the same way the Son gives life to those he wants to.”*

Unfortunately for those critics of the Gospel of John, the Synoptic gospels also tell about Jesus bringing several persons back to life. Examples are found in **Luke 7:11-15; 8:49-56, Matthew 8:18-19, 23-26, and Mark 5:35-43.**

Perhaps the boldest such claim came in John 11, when Jesus raised his friend, Lazarus, from the dead, after he had been buried for four days! Lazarus was clear **living proof of Jesus’ authority and power to raise the dead.**

Those resurrections recorded in the gospels were powerful expressions of the fulfillment of Jesus’ promise in vs. 20 but **the biggest – most amazing of the resurrections connected with Jesus was his own Resurrection!** Indeed, all of the New Testament gospels reported Jesus was raised from the dead.

Therefore, **John the Baptist’s testimony about Jesus and the deeds God gave the Son – Jesus to do witness to his authority and to his relationship with the Divine Parent.**

If that is our calling because we are part of the Church – the Body of Christ – the community of believers, those who believe in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, then, will we move forward – live our lives under his authority – trusting his relationship with God? If we do, how will we express it? Amen.