

"The Scriptures Point to Jesus"
(John 5:31-47)
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³³ "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 John was a lamp that burned and gave light, and you chose for a time to enjoy his light.

³⁶ "I have testimony weightier than that of John. For the works that the Father has given me to finish—the very works that I am doing—testify that the Father has sent me. ³⁷ And the Father who sent me has himself testified concerning me. You have never heard his voice nor seen his form, ³⁸ nor does his word dwell in you, for you do not believe the one he sent. ³⁹ You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me, ⁴⁰ yet you refuse to come to me to have life.

⁴¹ "I do not accept glory from human beings, ⁴² but I know you. I know that you do not have the love of God in your hearts. ⁴³ I have come in my Father's name, and you do not accept me; but if someone else comes in his own name, you will accept him. ⁴⁴ How can you believe since you accept glory from one another but do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?

⁴⁵ "But do not think I will accuse you before the Father. Your accuser is Moses, on whom your hopes are set. ⁴⁶ If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me. ⁴⁷ But since you do not believe what he wrote, how are you going to believe what I say?"

Today's passage is the tail end of a story that began at the beginning of chapter 5. At the beginning of the chapter it was the Sabbath day, when Jesus came across a man who had been lame for 38 years and he healed him. He commanded the man to get up, carry your mat and walk, which is what he did. As the man was walking he encountered the Jewish leaders who asked him why he was breaking the law by carrying his mat on the Sabbath? These men obviously cared more about the violation of the law than whether the man was getting enough rest. The man mentions that the one who healed him told him to carry his mat and walk. The man only wants to avoid getting into trouble with the religious police. The leaders only want to investigate the one that would dare violate their Sabbath laws; neither cared to know the one who performed such a great healing.

Because of what Jesus did the Jewish leaders began to persecute him, even wanting to put him to death, for daring to call God his Father, which they believed was on par with making himself equal to God.

Jesus replies to this accusation by claiming to have the authority and the power to do the things that only God can do. He perfectly knows the Father's will and does the Father's will. He receives the special and unique love from the Father. Like the Father, Jesus also can give life to whomever he wishes. And as everyone knows that God the Father is the final judge; Jesus claims that the job of judging the world has been entrusted to him. Finally, he says, "Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him" (23).

This now brings us to today's passage beginning in verse 31- 47. Follow along as I read it:

5:31 "If I testify about myself, my testimony is not true.³² There is another who testifies in my favor, and I know that his testimony about me is true.

5:33 "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 John was a lamp that burned and gave light, and you chose for a time to enjoy his light.

5:36 "I have testimony weightier than that of John. For the works that the Father has given me to finish—the very works that I am doing—testify that the Father has sent me.³⁷ And the Father who sent me has himself testified concerning me. You have never heard his voice nor seen his form,³⁸ nor does his word dwell in you, for you do not believe the one he sent.³⁹ You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me,⁴⁰ yet you refuse to come to me to have life.

5:41 "I do not accept glory from human beings,⁴² but I know you. I know that you do not have the love of God in your hearts.⁴³ I have come in my Father's name, and you do not accept me; but if someone else comes in his own name, you will accept him.⁴⁴ How can you believe since you accept glory from one another but do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?

5:45 "But do not think I will accuse you before the Father. Your accuser is Moses, on whom your hopes are set.⁴⁶ If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me.⁴⁷ But since you do not believe what he wrote, how are you going to believe what I say?"

So, after all that dialogue about how Jesus shares the same characteristics and responsibilities and authority that belong to God, he now speaks about the matter of testimony. He's talking about a matter of validation. How can we know if I am who I say I am? This is in fact the most important question in every generation and still is today.

If Jesus perfectly knows and does the Father's will; if Jesus is in a unique love relationship with the Father, that no one else shares; if Jesus is truly able to give life when he wants and to whomever he wants; if Jesus is the one holding the judge's gavel in God's heavenly courtroom; and if Jesus is truly worthy of receiving the honor that is supposed to belong to God alone, then we need proof.

If you are who you say you are, if you are who you claim to be; if you're saying what I think you're saying, that you too are God, alongside of God the Father, you better have some proof. And that is exactly what Jesus offers.

Some of us don't need proof because you already believe in Jesus. But it doesn't hurt to have them, to strengthen the foundation you already have. When I became a Christian in university, it didn't happen after a long arduous season of investigation. For me God opened my eyes to the Scriptures, to my Sin, and to my Savior and I believed, but after I believed, year after year, I strengthened my foundation by adding the proofs.

Some of us already believe, but the reason you need proof is so you can better explain it to others. You have friends that want proof of who Jesus is, what he claimed to be, and if it's all true. Parents, you already know that it is your responsibility to help your children when they have their crisis of faith moment, and here's a tip...it's not if they'll have a crisis of faith moment, it's when they'll have it. So you need to be ready to listen and pray as well as educate them.

If you are a teacher for the youth/children in our church, part of your job as a teacher is to equip students to intelligently know, articulate, and defend their own faith and if you are not a Christian, here's what you've been asking for. Here's the proof that Jesus himself gives for who he is. I don't want to minimize how daunting the proverbial leaf of faith is for you. For those of us who grew up in church, hearing these things since we were toddlers, we can forget the magnitude of what we are actually believing.

Here's what's on the line for you. If I can put some words in your mouth..."So you're telling me that this Jesus Christ fellow, that all you Christians believe in, the founder of your religion, is the Creator of the universe? And, this Jesus, he along with God, was himself uncreated, that he always existed? Are you telling me that this Jesus holds not only my destiny, but the eternal destiny of every human being in his hands? Are you saying that every offense that I've ever committed is actually an offense against Jesus, so he is rightfully my judge when I die, he's the one that'll determine if I go to heaven or to hell? This Jesus is the one to whom all praise and honor and glory is due, which means, my entire life should be lived for him?

To that we Christians say, "Yes, and that's not even the half of it!" So, if anyone tells you anything less than that, run away. That's not Christianity. That is a misrepresentation of Jesus. Don't let anyone tell you that Jesus was just a nice guy, that he's merely a great teacher, that his life is merely an example to follow. Don't let anyone tell you that he's like a Christian version of Mohammad. He's like a Christian version of the Buddha. All that to say, I feel for you, for your struggle to believe. But then, what if it's true? What if Jesus is who he says he is? What if there is such a person? Wouldn't that be wonderful for you? Wouldn't such a person be deserving of your faith, your belief, your adoration, and even your life? So let's take a look at the proof. He gives three proofs, testimonies. Let's look at them one by one.

In verse 31 Jesus says, "If I testify about myself, my testimony is not true." Now that's a strange thing for Jesus to say. Is he saying, "Don't believe anything I say?" I highly doubt it. Or is he saying, "Never believe a man who constantly talks about himself?" I don't think he's saying that either. What Jesus is doing is he's appealing to standard legal protocol of his day. Any charge, any claim has to be supported by two or three witnesses. So Jesus is saying, anyone can make outrageous claims. Anyone can say that they've heard from God, been sent from God and things like that. But are there witnesses? Is there any corroborating evidence to support your claims? To which Jesus answers, "Yes!"

Witness #1: John the Baptist

When we go to the next verse, Jesus appeals to his first witness—John the Baptist. He says, “You have sent to John and he has testified to the truth.” And then Jesus says, “John was a lamp that burned and gave light, and you chose for a time to enjoy his light.” Jesus is saying, remember when John came on the scene? Didn't you go to investigate if he was legitimate? That account was in the first chapter and it goes like this:

1:19 Now this was John's testimony when the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him who he was. 20 He did not fail to confess, but confessed freely, “I am not the Messiah.”

1:21 They asked him, “Then who are you? Are you Elijah?”

He said, “I am not.”

“Are you the Prophet?”

He answered, “No.”

1:22 Finally they said, “Who are you? Give us an answer to take back to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?”

1:23 John replied in the words of Isaiah the prophet, “I am the voice of one calling in the wilderness, ‘Make straight the way for the Lord.’”

1:24 Now the Pharisees who had been sent ²⁵ questioned him, “Why then do you baptize if you are not the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?”

1:26 “I baptize with water,” John replied, “but among you stands one you do not know. ²⁷ He is the one who comes after me, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie.”

Jesus is saying, you went and inquired of John and it appears you accepted his testimony. Didn't you accept him as a prophet sent by God? You didn't discredit him. You didn't shut him down. You enjoyed his light. And didn't he say to you that he was not the Messiah, but that he was pointing the way to the Lord, to God? Didn't you hear his testimony regarding me? And the following day when Jesus came to John, did he not say, “Look the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!?” As well, John said concerning Jesus, “A man who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.”

Listen to what John says next,

1:32 Then John gave this testimony: “I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. ³³ And I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, ‘The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.’ ³⁴ I have seen and I testify that this is God's Chosen One.

John the Baptist, the prophet sent by God, a prophet like the great Elijah, he's too is a witness to who Jesus is.

Witness #2: Moses and the Scriptures

Jesus says in verse 39, “You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me.”

Jesus is commending and condemning these Jewish leaders. He commends them for so diligently searching the Scriptures for eternal life, but then he criticizes them for failing to see that the eternal life for which they are seeking, is standing now, right before them.

At the end of the chapter Jesus says Moses testified about him. The Jewish leaders revered the Law of Moses, the first five books of the Jewish bible, and also the Christian bible, which is called the Torah, the Law. These five books were written by Moses himself. Some parts were the recordings of the actual dictation of God like the Ten Commandments, all the other laws, and the details regarding the Tabernacle. Other parts were written by Moses, under God’s inspiration, which were the historical events of the exodus from Egypt and the wanderings of God’s people in the desert.

And the Jews understood that Moses spoke about the one who was to come.

1:45 Philip found Nathanael and told him, “We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.”

But, where exactly did Moses write about Jesus? There are two ways he did so. One is very specific, and one is general.

Specifically, we need to go to Deuteronomy 18:15 where Moses says, “The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your fellow Israelites. You must listen to him.” This was understood to be referring to the future Messiah. How does Jesus fulfill that?

Well, on the mount of transfiguration, Jesus took three of his closest disciples. And on top of that mountain, Jesus was transformed. For a moment the veil of his deity was removed and he shone in brilliant white, in all his radiant glory. Then appearing before them were Moses and Elijah. Listen to what happens next.

While he was still speaking, a bright cloud covered them, and a voice from the cloud said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!” (**Matthew 17:5**)

The same words that were spoken to Moses are spoken here. “Listen to him.” Jesus is here receiving the confirmation that he is the prophet that God promised to Moses. So that’s in a very specific sense.

What about the general sense? This may take a bit more time to unpack, but it’ll be worth the effort.

One of the things found in the Law of Moses are laws, commands. There are the Ten Commandments and all the additional commands. The purpose of God giving the Law to us was to show us what a holy God requires of his people. It tells us how we are to live in relationship with God and with one another. However the law was not given to us so that by keeping them, we would be accepted by God. No, the Law was given after the people were already accepted by God. The Law was given to say, “now that you’ve been saved, now that I’ve saved you, this is how I want you to live.”

The law was also given to show us that it is impossible to keep. It was given to us, in all of its impossibility to show us that we could never earn God's favor or approval by keeping it. In fact the rest of the Old Testament is basically one illustration after another of that very fact. The law was given to tell us we need a savior. In that way, the entire Law of Moses speaks of Jesus.

Here's one more thing. What we see throughout the Torah is God's way of dealing with sin and God's way to save. The climactic event of the Torah is the exodus from Egypt. There would be only one way to make it out safely. You would have to be under the blood of a lamb. On the night before their escape, every Israelite household was to slaughter a lamb and to take the blood and smear it on the doorframes of their homes. Every person who was inside a home that had lamb's blood on its doorframe was saved. This event prefigured another lamb, whose blood would be spilled, and only those who were under this lamb's blood would be saved.

Then finally, consider the tabernacle, the temple, the holy place where people could meet God. What would you find there? You would find a place, a structure. Managing the structure were priests. They were the mediators between God and the people, but the problem was that they too were sinners. The priests also needed a priest. At the tabernacle you would also find people, sinful people, broken people who needed to have their sins forgiven. And at the tabernacle you would find the animal sacrifice. Blood, which represents the life of the animal, had to be shed, to cleanse people from their sins. These animal sacrifices reminded the people that every sin is a mortal sin. Every sin is a sin against God deserving of death. This tabernacle was located at the very center of the people, which was God's way of saying, I, a holy God, shall dwell among a sinful people. All of these things related to the tabernacle and temple, all of them, pointed to Jesus. Jesus said, "the true temple, the place of true worship, the place to have your sins forgiven is in me." Jesus himself was the final great high priest. He is the perfect and only mediator between God and man, because he was both God and man and Jesus was the final and ultimate blood sacrifice for the sins of humanity. The entire tabernacle system pointed to Jesus. In that way, all of the writings of Moses speak of Jesus, specifically and generally. That's the second witness.

Let's look at the final witness.

Witness #3: God the Father

In verse 32 he says, there is another witness. He appeals to God the Father, which is what the previous passage was all about, so we won't go into it too much here. God judges, I judge. God gives life, I give life. God reveals his will to me. I perfectly do his will. And so on.

Then Jesus says (v36), "I have testimony weightier than that of John. For the works that the Father has given me to finish—the very works that I am doing—testify that the Father has sent me." What Jesus is doing here is saying that there are specific things God has assigned the Messiah to do. And what are those things that he has yet to finish? The Messiah was to come, not as a conquering king, but rather as a suffering servant. We don't have the time here, but read Isaiah chapter 53, which will tell you about the works the Messiah was to do.

Conclusion:

Should you believe in Jesus? A person who said what he said, claimed what he claimed, is a person who is impossible to ignore. What will you do with such a person? I'll tell you what you can't do. You cannot treat him like a salad bar and just pick the parts that you like. You cannot just say I'll follow him on Sundays, but it'd be nice if he left me alone on Mondays to Saturday. You cannot say, if I can get heaven but I wish he would stay out of my personal life, then I'll take it. Those are things you cannot say, not to one who claimed what he claimed, and in fact proved it, when he went to the cross, died for you, gave up everything for you because he loved you, and then proved that he has power over death, over hell, over judgment, by rising from the dead. Should you believe in Jesus? Yes, you should.

Let's pray.