

Witnesses of Jesus

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Salem

John 5:32-47

INTRODUCTION:

In Colorado Springs back in 1990 there was a 17 year old female exchange student, named Storme Aerison, who sang soprano in choir and who was the captain of her cheerleading squad.

- However, she was arrested, kicked off the cheerleading squad and out of school for a very interesting reason.
- Apparently some of her classmates noticed that she had stubble showing through her make up.
- He was actually a 26 year old black man named Charles Daugherty.

Four years later, using the same name, Charles was caught again posing as (and I know this is probably going to be hard to believe) a supermodel in order to elicit credit card numbers.

- He used colored contact lenses to give himself the appearance of a blonde woman with blue eyes.
- He actually gained quite an entourage of photographers and supporters.
- He was arrested again for fraudulently spending hundreds of thousands of dollars that he conned out of a hotel in Colorado Springs.

In these modern times, we all recognize that identity claims need to be verified.

- If a utility person comes to your door wanting to enter your home, you need to see some identification in order to be very certain that he or she actually works for the utility company.
- If someone dressed like a police officer comes to your door, you want to be sure that they can prove that they are actually an officer of the law.
- If you are going in for brain surgery, you need to be sure that the neurosurgeon has the skills and the credentials necessary to do the procedure.
- When any person claims to be something and then doesn't offer proof, we won't accept them.
- And when someone makes claims that will affect our entire lives and even our eternity, we need to be absolutely certain that they are who they say they are.

This morning, I would like for us to focus on a passage of scripture in **John 5** where we find that Jesus gave significant proof of His identity.

- Before we begin reading we should notice that Jesus makes reference to the Mosaic Law.
- In **verse 31**, Jesus said, "*If I alone testify about Myself, My testimony is not true.*"
- **Deuteronomy 19:15** says, "*A single witness shall not rise up against a man on account of any iniquity or any sin which he has committed; on the evidence of two or three witnesses a matter shall be confirmed.*"
- And **Numbers 35:30** says, "*...no person shall be put to death on the testimony of one witness.*"
- In other words, the testimony of one individual as a witness is basically worthless—The Law specifically required a bare minimum of two people to give valid testimony.

As we read through **John** starting at **verse 31**, we are going to find that there are a number of sources that testify on behalf of Jesus as being the Son of God—The Messiah and Savior of the world.

- Notice, as we read, how many sources of testimony about Jesus existed at the time.
- Let's read **John 5:31-38...**

31 *If I alone testify about Myself, My testimony is not true.*

32 *"There is another who testifies of Me, and I know that the testimony which He gives about Me is true.*

33 *"You have sent to John, and he has testified to the truth.*

34 *"But the testimony which I receive is not from man, but I say these things so that you may be saved.*

35 *"He was the lamp that was burning and was shining and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light.*

36 *"But the testimony which I have is greater than the testimony of John; for the works which the Father has given Me to accomplish--the very works that I do--testify about Me, that the Father has sent Me.*

37 *"And the Father who sent Me, He has testified of Me. You have neither heard His voice at any time nor seen His form.*

38 *"You do not have His word abiding in you, for you do not believe Him whom He sent.*

As we consider this passage this morning, I believe that it is imperative that we remember that the most important first step in anybody's salvation is acknowledging belief in Jesus Christ as the Son of God.

- We refer to this as the great confession.

I have a cousin that I have had some religious conversations with and he is not even at the point in his faith where he is certain that the Bible is God's word.

- He is a **"deep thinker"** and is exploring in his own mind, whether or not the Bible (and therefore Christianity) even makes sense.
- In some ways, therefore, he is like many of the Jews in the New Testament that Jesus was addressing in this passage—he does not believe Jesus to be the Messiah.

This is a very pertinent passage for us to understand therefore.

- It is a foundational element that we as Christians need to be familiar with in order for us to help others to become a Christian.
- Let us consider the evidence that Jesus is who He says He is.

I. As we closely evaluate this passage we first notice that Jesus makes reference in **verse 33 to the WITNESS OF JOHN.**

Based on the context, it is very clear that Jesus was referring to His cousin, John the Immerser.

- In **verse 33**, Jesus very specifically told the Jews, *"You have sent to John, and he has testified to the truth."*

The Apostle John in some of the opening words of his gospel account said the following... *"There came a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness, to testify about the Light, so that all might believe through him. He was not the Light, but he came to testify about the Light."* (John 1:6-8)

- In **verse 29** of that very same chapter, John the Immerser specifically referred to Jesus saying, *"Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"*
- And again, just a few verses later he specifically said *"I myself have seen, and have testified that this is the Son of God."*
- John the Immerser very clearly identified Jesus as the Son of God.

What I find so interesting about this is that the Jews seemed to have been so quick to think that perhaps John was the Messiah earlier, but now that the Messiah has arrived, they refuse to believe.

- In **John 1:19-26**, the Jews had sent some priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask John who he was... *"They asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" And he said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" And he answered, "No.""*

- They continued asking him, “*Who are you, so that we may give an answer to those who sent us?*”
- So it sounds like, the Jews were ready to believe in John as the Messiah.
- In **verse 35**, Jesus pointed out that they had been willing to rejoice over John’s message.
- They had acknowledged that he was a prophet of God, but then they refused to believe him when he specifically pointed to Jesus as the Son of God.

In today’s modern courts, one of the first things that a defense attorney is going to attempt to do to a damaging witness is to in some way discredit them as incompetent and not a good witness.

- Let’s take a moment to consider the strength of John as a character witness.
- Adam Clarke’s Commentary points out the following...
 1. He is consulted by the very enemies of Christ, as a very holy and extraordinary man.
 2. He is perfectly free from all self-interest, having declined making the least advantage by his own reputation.
 3. He is sincere, undaunted, and so averse from all kinds of flattery that he reproves Herod at the hazard of his liberty and life.
 4. He was so far from being solicited by Christ to give his testimony that he had not even seen him when he gave it.
- John, therefore was not just a witness... he was in fact a very trustworthy witness.

What other kind of witness does Jesus point out?

- In **verse 34**, Jesus said, “*But the testimony which I receive is not from man...*”
- He continues on even a step further in **verse 36** when He says, “*...the testimony which I have is greater than the testimony of John.*”

II. In **verse 36**, Jesus made reference to THE WITNESS OF WORKS (V36).

Jesus said, “*for the works which the Father has given Me to accomplish--the very works that I do--testify about Me, that the Father has sent Me.*”

- It is worthy of mention, that John didn’t do any miracles.
- This generation of Jews had never seen a walking staff turn into a snake, a burning bush that wouldn’t burn, or a pillar of cloud by day or a pillar of fire by night.
- They had never heard the booming voice of God or seen a spring of water come forth from a rock after being struck by a man of God.
- They had never seen the Red Sea parted or entire cities thrown into confusion at the hand of God.
- They believed that all of these things had happened, but (from what we understand) they had never seen one single miracle in all of the days of their lives.
- That is... they hadn’t seen one until Jesus came along.

Even above and beyond that, Jesus performed miracles which had never been done before in the history of the world!

- In other words, some of them were even more incredible than those that had been done in ages past.
- In **John 15:24**, Jesus said, “*If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would not have sin; but now they have both seen and hated Me and My Father as well.*”

There is a very interesting passage in **John 10** that demonstrates to us that the miracles of Jesus were an effective way of getting the Jews to believe in Him.

- Some of the Jews had said that Jesus has a demon and is insane; however, other Jews in **John 10:21** said, “*These are not the sayings of one demon-possessed. A demon cannot open the eyes of the blind, can he?*”

- So some of them acknowledged that Jesus' ability to heal the blind ruled out the accusations that others were making of Him.
- It was just after this that the Jews said, "*If You are the Christ, tell us plainly.*"
- I'd like to read Jesus' response in **John 10:25-28**...

25 Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe; the works that I do in My Father's name, these testify of Me.

26 "But you do not believe because you are not of My sheep.

27 "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me;

28 and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish;

First of all, Jesus was making it clear once again that the works that He did testify of Him and prove Him to be who He says He is.

- But, second of all, that those who did "*believe*" in Him, that "*hear*" His voice, who got to "*know*" Him and that chose to "*follow*" Him would have the promise of eternal life.

So far we have seen that not only did John testify of Jesus as the Son of God, but also the works that He did, show evidence that He spoke the truth.

III. **As we continue forward in verses 37-38, we also find Jesus making reference to the WITNESS OF THE FATHER.**

In **verse 37**, Jesus said, "*And the Father who sent Me, He has testified of Me. You have neither heard His voice at any time nor seen His form.*"

- In the next verse, Jesus basically said, "**The problem is, you don't have God's word abiding in you, therefore you don't believe that He sent me.**"
- "**If you studied God's word with an open mind, you would understand that I am the one that He has sent.**"

What I find to be interesting is that Jesus brought up the fact that the Jews had not heard God's voice.

- Moses and other men of faith in the ages past **had** heard the voice of God.
- There were times when people actually heard the voice of God, but they usually wrote it off as simply thunder—perhaps they subconsciously knew what they heard, but did not want to admit it.
- And that seems to be the case with the Jews here in **John 5**—They just did not want to admit that Jesus was the Savior.

For this reason, it seems that God chose to speak to faithful men.

- Peter, James and the apostle John had heard the voice of God on two different occasions.
- In **Matthew 3:17**, at Jesus' baptism, "*a voice out of the heavens said, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased."*
- And likewise, at the transfiguration of Jesus in **Matthew 17:5**, "*a voice out of the cloud said, "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!"*
- This must have made quite an impact on Peter as he would later write about this in 2 Peter 1:17-18

17 For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory, "This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased"--

18 and we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.

And although the Jews had not specifically heard the voice of God, they had received a testimony from God through John and through the works that Jesus had done.

- And even more importantly there is another way in which God testified of Jesus as His Son.

IV. That is through the WITNESS OF THE SCRIPTURES (V39-47).

Let's continue forward in **John 5** and let's read **verses 39-47**...

39 "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me;

40 and you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life.

41 "I do not receive glory from men;

42 but I know you, that you do not have the love of God in yourselves.

43 "I have come in My Father's name, and you do not receive Me; if another comes in his own name, you will receive him.

44 "How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and you do not seek the glory that is from the one and only God?

45 "Do not think that I will accuse you before the Father; the one who accuses you is Moses, in whom you have set your hope.

46 "For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote about Me.

47 "But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?"

The Jews had Moses as a witness of Jesus' coming.

- They had the testimony of Isaiah, and Jeremiah, and King David.
- Through the Old Testament Scriptures, they had many different men of God making reference to Him and His coming.
- They gave great detail about when and where He would come, and that there would be a man that would come before Him to prepare the way—A man from the wilderness who would be known as John the Immerser.
- The Scriptures, you would think, would be more than sufficient evidence of Jesus being the Son of God.

Prophecies from the Old Testament indicated that the Messiah would be born of a virgin from the family of Abraham, of the tribe of Judah, of the royal line of David, in Bethlehem.

- This would happen during the time of the Roman Empire while Judah still possessed its own king.
- The Messiah would have a Galilean ministry and He would be murdered about 490 years after the command to restore Jerusalem at the end of the Babylonian captivity, which was 457BC.
- He was to be kind and sympathetic in His dealings with mankind.

Many more prophecies were fulfilled through the betrayal, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus.

- The thing is, the Jews were the experts on the Scriptures and they should have had more than sufficient evidence to believe that Jesus was who He said He was.
- He had shown His identification badge (so to speak) and because of the hardness of their hearts, they refused to acknowledge who He really was.

Later on, after the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, the writer of **Hebrews** wrote about the men and women of faith in the Old Testament Scriptures and how they "**by faith**" took action in their lives.

- In **Hebrews 12:1-2**, this letter makes reference to the testimony that these men and women had given... "**Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with**

endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

I believe that the real problem that the Jews were having is that they simply didn't like to be told that the way they were doing things was wrong.

- They were unwilling to be humble and to admit that they had been “*entangled*” with sin in their lives and they did not want to change the way they were conducting themselves.
- They didn't like being told what to do and they were so self-righteous that they refused to listen to the voice of reason coming from the most righteous man that ever lived.

This is still a problem today... People refuse to listen to the voice of God found in the Scriptures!

- Just earlier this week, I was communicating with a lady from Alabama who had indicated that she was saved the past week.
- I wrote to her and congratulated her for her decision to become a Christian and I asked her about her baptism.
- She wrote back expressing that she was going to be baptized in about 2 weeks.
- I wrote back and again emphasized how excited I was about her decision to follow Christ and I very carefully pointed out a few Bible passages that express that baptism is necessary for salvation and entering into the church that Christ established.
- She wrote back and basically expressed that she was a different person and that her light was now “**burning bright and strong,**” that the Holy Spirit was in her, and that her pastor was doing a great job of teaching and guiding her.
- I responded again, very carefully by pointing out that she was putting more trust in her pastor than she was in the word of God.

There is a little more to it than what I have time to share with you, however my point is that I had now told her something that she didn't want to hear.

- I had shown her scriptures (God's word) that contradicted what her pastor was teaching her, and she refused to look at the Scriptures as a testimony of the truth.
- This is a very real problem today.

Brothers and sisters, I would like to encourage you to take every opportunity that you can do accurately identify Jesus Christ as the Son of God and show people the importance of following His teachings.

- One of the last things that Jesus said before ascending back to heaven was this... “*Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you...*” (Matthew 28:19-20)
- Not only did He specifically tell them to baptize, but He told them to teach people to observe **all** that He had commanded.

SUMMARY:

The first and most important step in our salvation comes from an acknowledgement that Jesus was the Christ that was sent by God the Father.

- And since the Jews refused to believe in Him, Jesus pointed out some of the witnesses that testified that He was who He said He was.

CONCLUSION & INVITATION:

We have more than sufficient evidence today to come to the same conclusions about Jesus.

- We may not have John here in person to tell us about Him.
- We may not be able to see the works that Jesus did.
- We may not have heard the voice of God speaking to us.
- But we do have the eyewitness accounts of so many in the Scriptures that we shouldn't have any problem being able to come to the point that we can make the good confession.

When the Ethiopian officer had been taught about Jesus in **Acts 8**, he requested baptism and Phillip responded by saying, "*If you believe with all your heart, you may.*"

- To which he responded by saying, "*I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.*"
- If you are at this point in your faith and you do believe that Jesus is the Son of God, but you have never been baptized for the right reasons, what are you waiting for?
- Your eternal salvation is more important than anything this world can provide!