

**Sermon Series Four: Believe and Live**  
*(The Gospel of John: Signs of the Messiah - 1:1-12:50)*  
**John 5:31-47**  
*The Witnesses to Jesus*

How do you know that the claims that Jesus made concerning himself are true? How do you know that he is the way, the truth and the life? How do you know that he is the bread of life, the resurrection and the life, the light of the world? As Jesus himself says, *“If I alone bear witness about myself my testimony is not deemed true”* (5:31). Jesus has just made eye-popping claims about his authority. He claims that God has established him as the final judge and that he is the one who will raise all that have died at the end of history. He has also claimed absolute equality with God. Now imagine that a person has come to see us at our home and they claim that the CEO of a very large company has promoted us to the position of Executive Vice President. That would be good news, but it is meaningless unless the messenger has really come from the boss. If we call the firm and find out that they have never heard of this person, then we can dismiss the visit as some strange practical joke. However, if the messenger really was sent by the boss, then we know that his offer is genuine. Although God the Father is the primary witness that the claims of Christ concerning himself are true, he has graciously provided further supplementary witnesses so that you may know that Christ is who he says he is and you might be able to fully trust in him. Jewish law stated that the corroboration of a person’s testimony required at least two or three witnesses. Jesus now sites four independent testimonies that reinforce and corroborate his own: the testimony of God himself, the testimony of John the Baptist, the witness of Jesus’s miracles, and the testimony of the Scriptures. These become four reasons why you can know that all you believe about Jesus Christ is true!

**I. The Testimony of God the Father - the primary witness (5:32, 37-38)**

<sup>32</sup> *There is another who bears witness about me, and I know that the testimony that he bears about me is true...* <sup>37</sup> *And the Father who sent me has himself borne witness about me. His voice you have never heard, his form you have never seen,* <sup>38</sup> *and you do not have his word abiding in you, for you do not believe the one whom he has sent.*

**1. The Father spoke directly from heaven at his baptism and at the transfiguration.** He said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased” (Matthew 3:17; Matthew 17:5). The baptism was a public event, but the transfiguration was a yet future private event. The testimony of the Father probably also includes the Old Testament prophecies concerning him.

**2. They have rejected the testimony from the Father.** Jesus explains that because of their disbelief, the Jews had never heard God's voice or seen his form. Apparently when God spoke at Christ's baptism they heard the sound of a voice but did not understand what was being said (That would later be the case in John 12:28). What Jesus seems to be emphasizing is that he alone has clearly heard God's voice and seen his form - eternally existing with him in heaven. Yes, God had given to Moses the Law and had communicated to him, but now someone far greater than Moses was in their midst and they rejected him.

## **II. The Testimony of John the Baptist (5:33-35)**

<sup>33</sup> *You sent to John, and he has borne witness to the truth.* <sup>34</sup> *Not that the testimony that I receive is from man, but I say these things so that you may be saved.* <sup>35</sup> *He was a burning and shining lamp, and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light.* \*\*\*John is the first of **three supplemental corroborating witnesses**. The fact that they had already sought John out and asked him for an explanation bound them to give proper consideration to John's testimony. His testimony, as the forerunner of the Messiah, had been powerfully effective and had reached a wide audience of people preparing them for the further revelation of truth in the person of Jesus the Messiah.

**1. John declared Jesus to be the "Lamb of God" and "Son of God" (1:29, 34).** The symbolism of the Passover lamb and other Old Testament sacrifices was that deliverance through the blood of the lamb prefigured the coming of Jesus as the final sacrifice and the one who would obtain full salvation for God's people through his death. His substitutionary death would fully satisfied God and takes away the sin of the whole world. Further he is God himself, the second person of the Trinity.

**2. John was a burning and shining lamp.** He was a brightly burning lamp sent by God to cast its light on the coming Messiah. Indeed the light that he exuded had as its source the one who would later declare himself to be the "Light of the World."

**3. The people first accepted and then rejected John's message.** For a short season the people would be open to his message and sadly that would also be true with Christ.

## **III the Testimony of Jesus's Miracles and Words (5:36)**

<sup>36</sup> *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.*

The term "works" here often refers to Christ's miracles which are signs that authenticate and point to the truth of his person and his divine origin. But they also

refer to Christ's words. *People ought to be able to see God's hand in Jesus works, and God's voice in Jesus's words.* John gives us seven signs revealing Christ's nature and character in the book:

1. The **changing of the water into wine** (John 2:1-11) points to Christ as the Creator and the one who can bring fullness of joy into the believer's life.

2. The **healing of the nobleman's son** (4:46-54) is an example of a "long distance" miracle demonstrating that Jesus has power over disease and the power to instill faith in a troubled anxious heart.

3. The **healing of a disabled man** (5:1-18) not only shows Christ's power over his physical body, but demonstrates that we all are like the disabled man spiritually. We have sinned and are unable spiritually to see Christ, but Jesus comes to us to save us and to free us from sin's bondage. Note that in this story Jesus says to the man "See you are well! Sin no more, that nothing worse may happen to you."

4. The **feeding of the 5000** (6:1-14) demonstrates that Jesus has the power to provide for our every need including not only satisfying our physical hunger but our spiritual hunger also.

5. The **walking upon the water** (6:16-21) shows that Jesus possesses power over the laws of nature. He can in an instant calm the storm and the waves.

6. The **healing of the man born blind** (9:1- 41) shows that Jesus can restore both physical sight and spiritual sight to the blind.

7. The **raising of Lazarus from the dead** (11:1- 46) is a powerful display of Christ ability to overcome nature, sin, sickness and death. He is the source of eternal life and the giver of life.

\*\*\*These miracles are not necessarily occasioned by faith, but are occasions for faith. They are given to provoke faith and to strengthen faith.

#### **IV. The Testimony of the Scriptures (5:39-47)**

*<sup>39</sup> You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, <sup>40</sup> yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life. <sup>41</sup> I do not receive glory from people. <sup>42</sup> But I know that you do not have the love of God within you. <sup>43</sup> 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. <sup>44</sup> How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God? <sup>45</sup> Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father. There is one who accuses you: Moses, on whom you have set your hope. <sup>46</sup> For if you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me. <sup>47</sup> But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words?"*

These verses stand at the end of this discourse much the way a star witness might be introduced at the end of a trial to nail down the case for the prosecution.

**1. The Scriptures are Christ's star witness because the purpose of Scripture is to point to him and reveal him.** Therefore to use the Bible in any other way is ultimately to misunderstand it and pervert its intention. The Bible's witness is the divine doctor's diagnosis: 1) The Bible *diagnoses the spiritual condition* of the human race so that individual men, women, and children might turn to the Lord Jesus Christ since he is the only one who can cure their sinful condition and bring healing to their bodies and souls. 2) The Old Testament is filled with dozens of prophecies concerning the details of Christ's life, death, and resurrection demonstrating that the *great physician has acted in love* to redeem sinners both before the incarnation and through the incarnation.

**2. The dilemma is that many have misused the Scriptures.** **First**, they have filled their minds with the knowledge of Scripture, but have not come to know the central figure of Scripture, Jesus Christ. They have gained honor from men for their detailed knowledge of theology and biblical studies but they have not gained salvation. In effect, they have used the Scripture for their own ends. They worship the glory and honor that comes from their scholarship instead of worshipping God. In all of their preoccupation with the details of Scripture they have missed the very point of Scripture. **Second**, they've considered the Scriptures rather than God to be the source of eternal life. They actually believed that the memorization of Scripture in itself heavily contributed to their salvation. Eternal life comes through meeting or encountering Jesus, not through Bible study, even though it is through Bible study that one comes to know Jesus better. **Third**, the point of the law was not to help them to do better or be better than others but to show them that no matter how well they did they could not do well enough to satisfy God. The point is not "Am I as good as my neighbor?" The point is "Am I as good as God?"

**3. Indeed the Scriptures will be their primary accuser on judgment day.** Jesus's criticism of his hearers did not arise from wounded pride but from his love for God and his love for them. By rejecting Jesus they had rejected the Father's Ambassador who had come in his name and thereby rejected the Father himself. Having rejected the true Messiah the people would end up following false messiahs and ultimately the Antichrist. These critics most severe indictment would not come from Jesus, but from Moses whom they strongly profess to follow but in fact did not. Moses never taught the Law was an end in itself but pointed the people to the coming "Prophet" and urged them to listen to him (Deuteronomy 18:15-19). They foolishly hoped in Moses rather than the one to whom Moses pointed. Therefore Moses would be the one who would indict them. For in rejecting Moses writings they have rejected Christ.

## Conclusion

As we have seen, there is compelling witness for the claims of Jesus Christ. I can know without a doubt that Christ is who he says he is and that Christ has done what he says he has done for us. God the Father says so! John the Baptist says so! The miracles and substantiated words of Christ say so! And the Scriptures say so! But if they are so, than I must surrender to Christ as the Lord of my life. So many times in life we miss the obvious. The leaders of Israel in Christ's day had missed the obvious. There was their Messiah standing right in front of them. And they kept looking for someone else. It reminds me of the story: **A customs officer observed a truck pulling up at the border. Suspicious, he orders the driver out and searches the vehicle. He pulls off the panels, bumpers, and wheel cases but finds not a single scrap of contraband, whereupon, still suspicious but at a loss to know where else to search, he waves the driver through. The next week, the same driver arrives. Again the official searches, and again finds nothing illicit. Over the years, the official tries full-body searches, X rays, and sonar, anything he can think of, and each week the same man drives up, but no mysterious cargo ever appears, and each time, reluctantly, the customs man waves the driver on. Finally, after many years, the officer is about to retire. The driver pulls up. "I know you're a smuggler," the customs officer says. "Don't bother denying it. But [darned] if I can figure out what you've been smuggling all these years. I'm leaving now. I swear to you I can do you no harm. Won't you please tell me what you've been smuggling?" "Trucks," the driver says.** If Christ is who he says he is than he is not only your Savior, but the Lord of your life. There is great joy, satisfaction and peace that come from surrendering to Christ as Savior and Lord. Christ is standing in our midst today and he lovingly reminds us to not do what the leaders of Israel did - to miss the obvious!