

48. The Gospel of John—5:30-35

“The Four-fold Witness” Pt.1

(11/4/18)

Starting in John chapter 5 the Jewish leadership put Jesus ‘on trial’ as a lawbreaker (they claimed He violated Sabbath) and as a blasphemer (He claimed equality with God the Father thus declaring Himself to be God).

In verses 19 thru 29, Jesus *testifies* in His own defense, by defending His claim to be equal with the Father based on 5 evidences or truths:

1. *God is His Father*
2. *He is doing the same miraculous works the Father is doing*
3. *The Father has given Him power over life and death*
4. *The Father has given Him the authority to judge the world*
5. *The Father wants the Son to receive as much honor as Himself*

All of these become powerful and irrefutable facts that corroborate and substantiate Jesus’ claim of divinity and equality with the Father.

And while we’re at it, not only is proving Jesus’ divinity the whole point of this section in John 5—it is the whole point for John writing his gospel period!

John said at the end of chapter 20 that his whole purpose for writing his gospel in the first place was so that— **“you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and that by believing you might have life in His name.” (John 20:31)**

Critics refute that Jesus was actually declaring His divinity in verses 19-29 by pointing to verse 30—

John 5:30 (NKJV)

³⁰ **I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me.**

Theological liberals and assorted critics of the Bible point to Jesus' words here as '*proof*' (from His own mouth!) that He didn't have the power to do anything by Himself, and that He needed the Father's approval.

This, they contend, proves He couldn't be God because God can do anything He wants to do without getting permission from anyone!

This betrays a lack of understanding with regard to the mission of Jesus Christ as God incarnate and Redeemer.

Philippians 2:5-8 (NLT2)

⁵ You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had. ⁶ Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. ⁷ Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form, ⁸ he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross.

Hebrews 2:7 (NKJV)

⁷ *You have made him a little lower than the angels* [by becoming a Man to die for the sins of mankind]...

John 14:28 (NKJV)

²⁸ My Father is greater than I [in authority not in essence and being] ...

Jesus voluntarily put Himself under His Father's authority in every area of His life to accomplish His mission of redemption and as such—He never did anything on His own authority.

William MacDonald—

"This verse has often been used by false teachers to support their claim that Jesus Christ was not God. They say that because He could not do anything of His own self, therefore He was just a man. But the verse proves the very opposite. Men can do the things they want, whether they are

in accordance with the will of God or not. But because of who He was, the Lord Jesus could not so act. It was not a physical impossibility, but a moral impossibility. He had the physical power to do all things, but He could not do anything that was wrong—and it would have been wrong for Him to have done anything that was not the will of God the Father for Him. This statement sets the Lord Jesus apart from every other man who ever lived.

As the Lord Jesus listened to His Father and daily received instructions from Him, so He thought, taught, and acted. The word ‘judge’ does not here have the sense of deciding on legal matters but rather of deciding what was proper for Him to do and say. Because the Savior had no selfish motives, He could decide matters fairly and impartially. His one ambition was to please His Father and to do His will—nothing was allowed to stand in the way of this.”

This, in a ‘nutshell’ is the ultimate goal of the Christian life for all who follow Jesus—to only do the things God (Trinity) wants us to do.

We read in John 1:14 of Jesus’ incarnation—**“The Word became flesh and dwelt among us”**.

That is the goal for us as disciples of Christ—that we only do what God has said in His Word thus allowing the Word—*“to become flesh”* in our lives!

Now, after testifying in His own defense—Jesus (representing Himself as defense attorney) calls, not one, not two and not even three—but four witnesses to the ‘stand’ to give testimony that He is in fact the Son of the living God—God incarnate!

I. The Testimony of John the Baptist—v.31-35

II. The Testimony of Miraculous Works—v.36

III. The Testimony of the Father—v.37-38

IV. The Testimony of the Scriptures—v.39-47

I. The Testimony of John the Baptist—v.31-35

John 5:31 (NKJV)

³¹ "If I bear witness of Myself, My witness is not true.

Please don't misunderstand what the Lord is saying here when He said—"**If I bear witness of Myself, My witness is not true**".

He's not saying that His testimony of Himself (that He is God incarnate) was unreliable or patently false so that other witnesses needed to be brought forward who's testimony could be trusted.

Rather, He was simply acknowledging that Jewish law dictated at least two or three witnesses were required before a valid judgment could be legally rendered in a Jewish court of law.

This was something the Pharisees tried to use against Him in another heated exchange they had with the Lord in John 8:13 when they told Him, "*You bear witness of Yourself; [therefore] Your witness is not true.*"

This law was established by God in Deuteronomy 19:15, which says "*by the mouth of two or three witnesses the matter shall be established*".

Jesus has just told the Jews that He is God, but He knows that, according to Jewish law, His testimony alone is not enough.

And so now the Lord Jesus calls on 4 witnesses who will corroborate His testimony with regard to His claim of Deity.

And as we just said—the first one to take the stand in the Lord's defense (remember He was still refuting the accusations against Him that He violated Sabbath law and committed blasphemy) was His forerunner or herald, John the Baptist.

John 5:32-33 (NKJV)

³² There is another who bears witness of Me, and I know that the witness which He witnesses of Me is true. ³³ You have sent to John, and he has borne witness to the truth.

John the apostle opened his gospel by talking about the herald God promised to send before the Messiah—

John 1:6-7 (NKJV)

⁶ There was a man sent from God, whose name *was* John [the baptizer]. ⁷ This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe.

You see it was prophesied in the Old Testament that before Messiah, the King would make His appearance in Israel—He would first be preceded by a messenger or herald—

Malachi 3:1 (NKJV)

¹ "Behold, I send My messenger [herald], And he will prepare the way before Me...

When John started his public ministry, he was the first prophet in over 400 years and needless to say—he caused a ‘wave’ of Messianic excitement throughout the nation.

And because so many people were going out to the wilderness to be baptized by John and hear him preach that it attracted the attention of the Jewish leadership in Jerusalem, who sent a delegation out to see what was going on—

John 1:19-27 (NKJV)

¹⁹ Now this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" ²⁰ He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, "I am not the Christ." ²¹ And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" And he answered, "No." ²² Then they said to him, "Who are you, that we may give an answer to those who sent us? What do you say about yourself?" ²³ He said: "I am *'The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Make straight the way of the LORD,'* ' as the prophet Isaiah said." ²⁴ Now those who were sent were from the Pharisees. ²⁵ And they asked him, saying, "Why then do you baptize if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?" ²⁶ John answered them, saying, "I baptize with water, but there stands One among you whom you do not know. ²⁷ It is He who, coming after me, is preferred before me, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose."

Jesus here reminded these leaders of the testimony John gave them on that day—

John 5:33 (NKJV)

³³ You have sent to John, and he has borne witness to the truth.

In other words, *“You remember that John bore witness of Me when he told you that he wasn’t the Messiah but was My herald who went before Me to prepare the hearts of the people (thru repentance) to receive Me.”*

But then Jesus said—

John 5:34 (NKJV)

³⁴ Yet I do not receive testimony from man, but I say these things that you may be saved.

Jesus made sure His accusers understood that He didn’t need the testimony of any man to prove His identity.

As Creator God and Righteous Judge of all the earth, He would sit in judgement of them someday even though, for the moment, He would go along with them sitting in judgment of Him.

And He allowed it out of love for these men that they might be saved by coming to believe He was telling the truth about Himself—that He was in fact the Messiah and Savior of the world.

Jesus allows people to sit in judgment of Him, to give them the opportunity to hear the evidence that they might come to believe in Him and be saved.

The greatest example of this was the morning of the crucifixion when Jesus stood before Pilate who sat in judgment of Him—

Matthew 27:11-26 (NKJV)

¹¹ Now Jesus stood before the governor. And the governor asked Him, saying, "Are You the King of the Jews?" So Jesus said to him, "*It is as you say.*" ¹² And while He was being accused by the chief priests and elders, He answered nothing. ¹³ Then Pilate said to Him, "Do You not hear how many things they testify against You?" ¹⁴ But He answered him not one word, so that

the governor marveled greatly.¹⁵ Now at the feast the governor was accustomed to releasing to the multitude one prisoner whom they wished.*¹⁶ And at that time they had a notorious prisoner called Barabbas.¹⁷ Therefore, when they had gathered together, Pilate said to them, "Whom do you want me to release to you? Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?"¹⁸ For he knew that they had handed Him over because of envy...²⁰ But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitudes that they should ask for Barabbas and destroy Jesus.²¹ The governor answered and said to them, "Which of the two do you want me to release to you?" They said, "Barabbas!"²² Pilate said to them, "What then shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?" *They* all said to him, "Let Him be crucified!"²³ Then the governor said, "Why, what evil has He done?" But they cried out all the more, saying, "Let Him be crucified!"²⁴ When Pilate saw that he could not prevail at all, but rather *that* a tumult was rising, he took water and washed *his* hands before the multitude, saying, "I am innocent of the blood of this just Person. You see *to it*."²⁵ And all the people answered and said, "His blood *be* on us and on our children."²⁶ Then he released Barabbas to them; and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered *Him* to be crucified.

There are two things here we need to see.

First, when asked to choose between the righteous and the lawless—the fickle crowd will always choose lawlessness over righteousness due to man’s fallen nature. (Elaborate)

The second thing we need to see is how Pilate let the crowd make the decision for him as to what he was going to do with Jesus—**“What then shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?”**

In that regard Pilate becomes an example of the place every human being finds him or herself in when presented with the gospel—*“What am I going to do with Jesus who is called Christ?”*

Each person must decide for themselves what they are going to do with Jesus who is called Christ.

But unlike Pilate, the one thing you must *never* do is let the crowd make that decision for you—too much is at stake (talk about peer pressure).

But Pilate (like so many others) thought he was sitting in judgment of Jesus—when in reality he was actually sitting in judgment of himself!

The judgment he rendered concerning Jesus would not affect *Jesus*—but would affect where *Pilate* would spend eternity.

God never forces us to believe in or to follow Jesus—He simply presents us with a choice.

But then He makes sure that we understand that, whatever we decide to do about Jesus, that decision will have eternal consequences attached to it—for us!

Jesus allows people to sit in judgment of Him now (“what shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?”)—but only for so long before He will judge them someday—

John 5:22-23 (NKJV)

²² For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son, ²³ that all should honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him.

Getting back to the witness of John, Jesus said—

John 5:35 (NKJV)

³⁵ He was the burning and shining lamp, and you were willing for a time to rejoice in his light.

When John finally came on the scene after the people of God had had no prophet to light their way for 400 years by preaching God’s Word (Ps.119:105)—the people rejoiced in John’s ministry—but only for a while.

For a while John was something of a celebrity in the nation—that is until he really began to hit hard the message of repentance—then they began to reject him.

Of course, tax-collectors, prostitutes and other sinners responded and eventually followed Jesus when He took over the ministry of John.

But the Jewish leadership, for the most part, wanted nothing to do with John's message of repentance—primarily because they believed they were 'right' with God and therefore had no need of repentance!

Jesus confronted their hypocrisy of giving God 'lip-service' without actually obeying Him in a parable—

Matthew 21:28-32 (NLT2)

²⁸ “But what do you think about this? A man with two sons told the older boy, ‘Son, go out and work in the vineyard today.’ ²⁹ The son answered, ‘No, I won’t go,’ but later he changed his mind and went anyway. ³⁰ Then the father told the other son, ‘You go,’ and he said, ‘Yes, sir, I will.’ But he didn’t go. ³¹ “Which of the two obeyed his father?” They replied, “The first.” Then Jesus explained his meaning: “I tell you the truth, corrupt tax collectors and prostitutes will get into the Kingdom of God before you do. ³² For John the Baptist came and showed you the right way to live, but you didn’t believe him, while tax collectors and prostitutes did. And even when you saw this happening, you refused to believe him and repent of your sins.

Warren Wiersbe—

“John was a “burning and a shining lamp” ...and the Jewish people were excited about his ministry. However, their enthusiasm cooled; and nobody lifted a finger to try to deliver John when he was arrested by Herod.

Whenever God raises up a spiritual leader who commands attention, there is always the danger of attracting people who want to bask in his popularity but not submit to his authority. A “mixed multitude” followed Moses and Israel out of Egypt, people who were impressed with the miracles but not yielded to the Lord. The prophets and Apostles, as well as the great leaders in church history, all had to put up with shallow people who followed the crowd but refused to obey the truth. We have them in churches today.”

Jesus said that John was **“a burning and shining lamp”**—that speaks of John's life being a witness—a life that was burning brightly for God!

Matthew 5:14-16 (NLT)

¹⁴ “You are the light of the world—like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father.

John didn't hide his faith, he lived it openly and publicly—and everyone knew where he stood.

No one can live an authentic and effective life for God who doesn't let their light shine—i.e. who isn't living out their faith with genuine holiness and faithfulness to the Lord!

John the Baptist and Jesus Himself were both 'hell fire and damnation preachers.'

The whole point in preaching the gospel is to tell people that God wants to save them—but save them from what?

Save them from poverty, depression and low self-esteem?! → NO! Save them from eternal judgment in hell!

This kind of preaching used to dominate pulpits all across this nation and was used by God to bring about periods of revival and the Great Awakenings.

Men like Jonathan Edwards in his sermon, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" said,
"Unconverted men walk over the pit of hell on a rotten covering, and there are innumerable places in this covering so weak that they will not bear their weight, and these places are not seen. The wrath of God burns against them..."

Can you image a message like this being preached in this day of political correctness where the goal of so many preachers is to keep things positive, upbeat and non-confrontational?

May God give us the boldness, the commitment and the passion of John the Baptist today.

He was the herald of Jesus' First Coming—and we are the heralds of His Second Coming!

May God give us the grace to be "*a voice crying in the wilderness*"—a lamp burning brightly in a dark and dying world!