

## 49. The Gospel of John—5:36-38

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### *“The Four-fold Witness” Pt.2*

(11/11/18)

Starting in John chapter 5 the Jewish leadership put Jesus ‘on trial’ (not literally, that would come later) as a lawbreaker (they claimed He violated Sabbath) and as a blasphemer (He claimed God was His Father making Himself equal with God).

In verses 19 thru 29, Jesus *testifies* in His own defense, by defending His claim of equality 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 substantiate Jesus’ claim of divinity and equality with the Father.

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.32-35**
- 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**

The verse that sets up this section, a section that runs from verse 32 thru verse 47 is verse 31—

<b>John 5:31 (NKJV)</b> <sup>31</sup> "If I bear witness of Myself, My witness is not true.
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In saying this, Jesus was *not* saying that His testimony of Himself (that He is God) 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 rendered in a Jewish court of law. (Deut.19:15)

Jesus has just told the Jewish leaders that He is God—but He knows that, according to Jewish law, His testimony alone was 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.

## I. The Testimony of John the Baptist—v.32-35

### **John 5:32 (NKJV)**

**<sup>32</sup> There is another who bears witness of Me, and I know that the witness which He witnesses of Me is true.**

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 as many believed that John himself might be the Messiah.

And because so many people were going out to the wilderness to be baptized by John and hear him preach—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)

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

### **John 5:33 (NKJV)**

**<sup>33</sup> 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.”*

### **John 5:35 (NKJV)**

**<sup>35</sup> He was the burning and shining lamp...**

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)—John became that light—that burning and shining lamp!

But understand that John became a light only in the sense that he pointed people to the true Light, the Lord Jesus Christ!—

**John 1:6-9 (NKJV)**

<sup>6</sup> There was a man sent from God, whose name *was* John. <sup>7</sup> This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe. <sup>8</sup> He was not that Light, but *was sent* to bear witness of that Light. <sup>9</sup> That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world.

When Jesus said that John was “**a burning and shining lamp, and you were willing for a time to rejoice in his light.**”

He was speaking of how *initially* people were drawn to John’s ‘light’ and rejoiced in that light—but only for a while until he really began to hit hard the message of repentance—then they began to reject him.

And so, after Jesus called John the Baptist to the stand to testify on His behalf that He was the Christ, the Son of the Living God—He then called another witness to the stand, a greater witness than even John—the **works** that Jesus did in the Father’s name.

## **II. The Testimony of Miraculous Works—v.36**

**John 5:36 (NKJV)**

<sup>36</sup> But I have a greater witness than John's; for the works which the Father has given Me to finish--the very works that I do--bear witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me.

The Greek word for ‘**works**’ could simply refer to the activities associated with any occupation.

Of course, Jesus’ ‘occupation’ was Messiah and His work was *redemption*—the work of saving the lost.

Therefore, every activity He did was focused on finishing that work—

**John 4:34 (NKJV)**

<sup>34</sup> Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work.

**John 19:30 (NKJV)**

<sup>30</sup> So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!" And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit.

And so, these *works* included everything from Jesus' sinless life and perfect obedience to His Father—to His teachings that revealed the light of God's truth to those in spiritual darkness.

Further, they included the miracles He did that testified to who He claimed to be—culminating in the ultimate work of redemption—His death on Calvary's cross and resurrection three days later.

However, I believe that, in *this* passage, the works the Lord was primarily referring to were the *miracles* He constantly went around doing (remember chapter 5 began with one of these).

These miracles bore witness that Jesus was in fact the Messiah sent from God according to the Old Testament prophecies (we'll look at those next week)—

**John 3:1-2 (NKJV)**

<sup>1</sup> There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. <sup>2</sup> This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs [miracles] that You do unless God is with him."

**John 10:25 (NKJV)**

<sup>25</sup> Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in My Father's name, they bear witness of Me.

**John 20:30-31 (NKJV)**

<sup>30</sup> And truly Jesus did many other signs [miracles] in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; <sup>31</sup> but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.

Now, it is true that miracles alone didn't prove Jesus' divinity—other men in the Old Testament like, Moses, Elijah, and Elisha had done miracles too.

In fact, in Deut.13, God warned that false prophets would come doing miracles to deceive—

**Deuteronomy 13:1-3 (NKJV)**

<sup>1</sup> "If there arises among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams, and he gives you a sign or a wonder, <sup>2</sup> and the sign or the wonder comes to pass, of which he spoke to you, saying, 'Let us go after other gods'--which you have not known--'and let us serve them,' <sup>3</sup> you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams, for the LORD your God is testing you to know whether you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

Jesus warned that false christs and false prophets would arise and be used by Satan to deceive many (by doing supernatural wonders) just prior to His return to the earth.

Paul echoed that and told us the greatest worker of lying signs and wonders would be the Antichrist—

**2 Thessalonians 2:9-11 (NLT2)**

<sup>9</sup> This man will come to do the work of Satan with counterfeit power and signs and miracles. <sup>10</sup> He will use every kind of evil deception to fool those on their way to destruction, because they refuse to love and accept the truth that would save them. <sup>11</sup> So God will cause them to be greatly deceived, and they will believe these lies.

And so, miracles alone didn't prove that Jesus was God incarnate—which brings us to the third witness that Jesus calls to give testimony on His behalf—**the Father**.

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

**John 5:37 (NKJV)**

<sup>37</sup> **And the Father Himself, who sent Me, has testified of Me...**

Now, when it comes to the miracles Jesus did—the Scriptures say the Father was doing the work thru His Son in an effort to prove the Son's divinity—and establish Jesus' testimony of Himself.

**John 14:10-11 (NKJV)**

<sup>10</sup> Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to

you I do not speak on My own *authority*; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works.

<sup>11</sup> Believe Me that I *am* in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves.

### **Acts 2:22 (NKJV)**

<sup>22</sup> "Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know--

Also, the Father testified *verbally* on His Son's behalf.

Twice from heaven the Father said, "*This is My beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased!*"—once when Jesus was baptized by John and then again while Peter, James and John were up on the Mount of Transfiguration with the Lord. (Matt.3:17; 17:5)

Peter mentions the Mount of Transfiguration event in his second epistle when he said—

### **2 Peter 1:16-18 (NKJV)**

<sup>16</sup> For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. <sup>17</sup> For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: "*This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*" <sup>18</sup> And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.

And then the most powerful testimony of the Son by the Father in Scripture—

### **Hebrews 1:1-9 (NKJV)**

<sup>1</sup> God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, <sup>2</sup> has in these last days spoken to us by *His* Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; <sup>3</sup> who being the brightness of *His* glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, <sup>4</sup> having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. <sup>5</sup> For to which of the angels did He ever say: "*You are My Son, Today I have begotten You*"? And again: "*I will be to Him a Father, And He shall be to Me a Son*"? <sup>6</sup> But when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says: "*Let all the angels of God worship Him.*"

<sup>7</sup> And of the angels He says: "*Who makes His angels spirits And His ministers a flame of fire.*"

<sup>8</sup> But to the Son He says: "*Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; A scepter of righteousness is*

*the scepter of Your Kingdom. <sup>9</sup> You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You With the oil of gladness more than Your companions."*

**John 5:37 (NKJV)**

<sup>37</sup> **And the Father Himself, who sent Me, has testified of Me. You have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His form.**

**“You have not seen His form.”**

God is Spirit (John 4:24) and a spirit has no physical form.

And because God is an invisible Spirit—He manifested Himself thru His flesh and blood Son to this world—

**Colossians 1:15 (NKJV)**

He [Jesus Christ] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.

The word “image” is a Greek word that was used of an image made by *impression* as when Caesar’s image was stamped on a coin.

God the Father “stamped” His image on human flesh in the Person of His Son, Jesus Christ—which allowed man to see what God is like.

God is Spirit and is therefore invisible—but through the incarnation the invisible God became a visible flesh and blood man.

**John 1:18 (NKJV)**

<sup>18</sup> No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared [manifested] *Him*.

And so, as Paul declared in Col.1:15—Jesus is “*the image of the invisible God*” or in other words—He is the perfect *manifestation* of the Father in human form.



**John 14:8-9 (NLT2)**

<sup>8</sup> Philip said, “Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.” <sup>9</sup> Jesus replied, “Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and yet you still don’t know who I am? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father! So why are you asking me to show him to you?”

**“You have never heard His voice” (v.37a)**

Understand, that even though the Father had audibly spoken at the baptism of Jesus and on the Mount of Transfiguration—these corrupt, hard-hearted Jewish leaders were not there.

I know they weren’t on the Mount of Transfiguration to hear the Father speak as He testified that Jesus was His beloved Son!

Which means the only other place they could have audibly heard the Father declare from heaven that Jesus was His beloved Son was at His baptism—but Jesus said they weren’t there either because they never heard the Father give audible testimony of Jesus’ divinity as His Son.

Now look, the Father could have spoken to these men *audibly* from heaven if He had chosen to do so but He didn’t need to seeing as He had spoken to them many times in the pages of their Holy Scriptures (our Old Testament) about the Messiah.

In fact, there are over 300 prophecies in the Jewish Scriptures about Messiah (Jesus’ First Coming and over 500 prophecies dealing with His Second Coming)—but they were so hard-hearted and spiritually blind they couldn’t see it and when Jesus pointed it out to them—they refused to come to Him.

**John 5:39-40 (NLT2)**

<sup>39</sup> “You search the Scriptures because you think they give you eternal life. But the Scriptures point to me!” <sup>40</sup> Yet you refuse to come to me to receive this life. (we’ll talk about that more next time)

So, the Father was constantly and audibly speaking to these men thru the ministry of His Son—Whom they refused to believe and listen to.

**John 5:38 (NKJV)**

<sup>38</sup> **But you [corrupt religious leaders] do not have His word abiding in you, because whom He sent, Him you do not believe.**

And so the Father would say no more to these men other than what Jesus was already declaring every day thru His public ministry—and at one point even Jesus stopped speaking to these hard-hearted rebels.

That's when He started teaching in parables—(Matt.13:10-11)

To the hard, rebellious, and obstinate hearted person God will only say so much and only for so long until He stops speaking and goes silent—because of the hardness of a person's heart.

Jesus exemplified this when He stood before Herod on the morning of His crucifixion and would not say a word to him. (Luke 23:8-9)

Jesus made it clear that to reject His testimony of Himself was tantamount to rejecting the Father because the Father had testified at different times and in various ways that Jesus was (and is) His Son—"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!" (Matthew 17:5)

**1 John 5:9-10 (NKJV)**

<sup>9</sup> If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater; for this is the witness of God which He has testified of His Son. <sup>10</sup> He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself; he who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed the testimony that God has given of His Son.

Jesus Christ is the true Light Who was sent by the Father to give the light of God's truth to every person living in this spiritually dark world (John 1:9).

There comes a point in the life of every unbeliever, who continually rejects the light of God's truth, where God eventually "turns out the lights"—and the Holy Spirit stops speaking to their hearts about salvation.

There is a story from World War II that illustrates this truth—

*“During World War II, an American naval force in the North Atlantic was engaged in heavy battle with enemy ships and submarines on an exceptionally dark night. Six planes took off from the carrier to search out those targets, but while they were in the air a total blackout was ordered for the carrier in order to protect it from attack. Without lights on the carrier’s deck the six planes could not possibly land. They made a radio request for the lights to be turned on just long enough for them to come in—but because the entire carrier, with its several thousand men, would have been put in jeopardy, no lights were permitted. When the six planes ran out of fuel, they had to ditch in the freezing water and all crew members perished into eternity”.*

God also reaches a point when He turns out the lights, and the opportunity for salvation is then gone forever.

That’s why the Bible says: *“Today is the day of salvation...if God is speaking to you right now don’t harden your heart any longer—this might be the last chance you will ever get”.*

At that point the opportunity for salvation has been officially withdrawn, they have passed the spiritually point of no return and have committed, what Jesus referred to as, *“Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit”*. The ‘day of grace’ has ended and their eternal destruction is sealed. (Judas—*“and it was night”*)

And I really think that was what Jesus was referring to when He said these men had never heard God speaking—I think what the Lord was actually saying was that—they had never heard Him speaking to their hearts.

But understand, God *was* speaking—they *weren’t* listening. And the reason they weren’t listening was because their pride and rebellion had made them ‘deaf’ to the voice of God.

Let me end by saying that God in His great love desires for all people to be saved and will do whatever He has to do to get a person’s attention that they would repent and receive Jesus as their Savior.

I believe He even does this with a nation—like ours.

We see God using storms like hurricanes on our east coast and wildfires and earthquakes on our west coast to get our attention.

We see anger and unrest in the streets as our nation has become deeply divided.

Mass shootings have become so routine that the news doesn't even bother to report many of them.

We see Him using the financial cliff we're about to go over (20 trillion in debt) to wake us up.

What does God have to do to finally get our attention—I shudder to think about it!

And yet, instead of repenting and getting our lives right with God—many in our country are voting for socialism (communism lite)!

This tells us that many in our country (the number is growing every day) are looking to government to take care of them instead of God.

Remember what Thomas Jefferson said, *“A government big enough to give you everything you want, is big enough to take away everything you have”*.

I'm wondering what is next?

May God be merciful to the United States of America and give us revival instead of judgment!