

## 50. The Gospel of John—5:39-47

---

### *“The Four-fold Witness” Pt.3*

(11/18/18)

Alright, unless a meteor hits the building—today we will finish John 5.

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 four witnesses to the ‘stand’ to give testimony that He is in fact who He claimed to be:

- 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

**John 5:39 (NKJV)**

**<sup>39</sup> You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me.**

The ‘**Scriptures**’ are a reference to our Old Testament (since the New Testament hadn’t been written yet)—these were the sacred Jewish Scriptures which they called the “Tanakh”

**Tanakh** is an acronym of the first Hebrew letter of each of the three divisions of their Scriptures:

- **Torah** ("Teaching", also known as the Five Books of Moses),
- **Nevi'im** ("Prophets")
- **Ketuvim** ("Writings")—hence **TaNaKh**.

#### **“You search the Scriptures”**

In 586 B.C. the temple in Jerusalem was destroyed by the Babylonians and the bulk of the Jews were taken captive to Babylon.

The captivity would last for 70 years and since the people (especially their priests and Levites) couldn’t practice their faith in a ceremonial way with temple rituals and sacrifices—they decided to focus all their attention on studying their Scriptures.

One scholar said,

*“They pored over the OT, endeavoring to extract the fullest possible meaning from its words, because they believed that the very study itself would bring them life. The study of Scripture had become an end in itself rather than a way of getting to know God better. Their failure to recognize Jesus as the Messiah testified to their lack of perceiving the true message of Scripture. Life comes through Jesus, not [simply] through Bible study (vv. 21, 26; cf. 1:4; Rom. 10:4). As John the Baptist, the Old Testament pointed away from itself to Jesus.”*

### **“The Scriptures...testify of Me.”**

In Psalm 40:7 (quoted in Hebrews 10:7) Jesus said that *“the scroll of the book [Old Testament] it is written of me”*

The entire Bible is the story of redemption, and the entire story of redemption is about One Person—Jesus Christ.

Remember that, before he became Paul the apostle, he was Saul of Tarsus—a rabbi and an expert in the Jewish Scriptures.

After his conversion (Acts 9) and once the Holy Spirit opened Paul’s eyes to see Jesus in every page, principle and prophecy of the Jewish Scriptures (our O.T.)—he was then able to go out immediately and preach that Jesus is the Christ and the Son of God. (Acts 9:20)

Skeptics would object, *“Yes but how could Paul be so sure that Jesus was the Christ and the Son of God? How can you be sure?”*

That’s a valid question.

We Christians are basing our lives and our eternities on the fact that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God—how can we be sure that He is in fact Who He claimed to be?

One of the greatest proofs we have that Jesus is Who He claimed to be is prophecy—

**Revelation 19:10 (NKJV)**

<sup>10</sup> ...For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

Prophecy is one of the most powerful and irrefutable proofs that we have that Jesus is in fact Who He claimed to be and Who we believe Him to be—God in human flesh, the Messiah and Savior of the world.

In his second epistle, Peter mentioned how he saw with his own eyes a preview of Jesus' Second Coming glory on the Mount of Transfiguration—but then he said, **“but we have the prophetic word confirmed.”**

The literal translation is, *"we have more sure the prophetic word"*.

Peter is telling us that, more reliable than the eye witness testimony of man—is the prophetic Word of God!

God told us things before they came to pass to validate the Bible as His Word and Jesus as His Son.

For almost the entire four-thousand year O.T. period, prophets had been foretelling the coming of the Messiah (Jude 1:14-15; Job 19:25)—which God Himself was the first One to prophesy His coming in Genesis 3:15. (Comment)

Hundreds of details were given about everything from His birth, life, death and resurrection.

So, to quote Peter once more, when it comes to the prophecies in God's Word—a person would do well to heed what God has said—(especially when He talks about the Second Coming of Christ) and adjust their lives accordingly (get saved) and start living for the Lord!

As we study the prophecies in the Bible concerning Jesus Christ, we discover that there are over 300 prophecies that deal with His First Coming; and 500 that deal with His Second Coming.

This morning I'd like to look at a few of these prophecies that predicted His First Coming—these were by no means vague or ambiguous—they were clear and specific.

- *2Samuel* 7 tells us that Messiah would be a descendant of King David—that eliminates every other *family* in the world.
- *Micah* 5:2 tells us He would be born in Bethlehem in the region (county) of Ephrathah (there was another Bethlehem up in Galilee)—that eliminates every other *place* in the world.
- *Daniel* 9:24-27 tells us that Messiah would be born sometime before the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple (which took place in 70 AD) and even predicts the exact day He would present Himself as Messiah—that eliminates every other time in the *history* of the world.

Now let me stop here and say that skeptics believe that Jesus simply read the prophecies in the Jewish Scriptures concerning the Messiah—and then went about fulfilling them so He could claim to be the Messiah.

Well listen, He might be able to do that with some of the prophecies—but with most of them that would be extremely difficult (like getting Judas to betray Him for exactly 30 pieces of silver or getting the Romans to cast lots for His cloak).

And with others it would be absolutely impossible—for example, Jesus fulfilled these first 3 prophecies in *2Samuel*, *Micah*, and *Daniel* by just being born! He didn't do anything!

- *Genesis* 3:15 and *Isaiah* 7:14 tell us He would be born of a virgin and that He would be Immanuel—“*God with us.*” This Messiah, whoever He would be, would not be a mere man but God in human form.

- *Isaiah 53* tells us He would lead a hard life, that He would be a Man acquainted with grief and suffering.
- *Psalms 41:9* says that someone close to Him, a dear and trusted friend, would betray Him.
- *Zechariah 11:11-13* tells us how much He would be betrayed for—30 pieces of silver. And that His betrayer would throw the money down in the Temple and that it would be used to buy a potter's field.
- *Isaiah 50 & 52* prophesy of the savage beating He would receive at the hands of His captors, the vicious scourging and ripping out of His beard.
- *Psalms 22* describes more vividly and graphically than the N.T. the way He would die—crucifixion, which was prophesied 900 years before the Persians even invented it.
- *Psalms 16* and other passages speak of His resurrection.

And many others that give detailed aspects of His life and earthly ministry—over 300 in all that deal with just His First Coming alone.

And that's not to mention the 500 prophecies in the O.T. that deal with His Second Coming!

If all the prophecies of His First Coming and many concerning His Second Coming have been fulfilled with flawless accuracy—does anyone want to bet that the rest won't come to pass with that same flawless accuracy?—“**You would do well to heed**”.

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

<sup>39</sup> You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. <sup>40</sup> **But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life.**

It's interesting how a person can study the Bible (sometimes their entire lives like liberal scholars) and still not comprehend the core message it teaches—that man is hopelessly lost and apart from Christ can do nothing good in the eyes of God—especially in the way of earning their salvation.

Paul talked about these religious people when he said, “[They’re] *always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.*” (2Tim.3:7)

And as we said last week, the reason for this is their pride—which blinds them to God’s truth.

The Jews (especially their leaders) were the epitome of religious people who believed that by keeping the law of Moses and doing good works (giving alms to the poor, fasting, praying etc.)—these things would *earn* them eternal life—

**Romans 10:1-4 (NLT2)**

<sup>1</sup> Dear brothers and sisters, the longing of my heart and my prayer to God is for the people of Israel to be saved. <sup>2</sup> I know what enthusiasm they have for God, but it is misdirected zeal. <sup>3</sup> For they don’t understand God’s way of making people right with himself. Refusing to accept God’s way, they cling to their own way of getting right with God by trying to keep the law. <sup>4</sup> For Christ has already accomplished the purpose for which the law was given. As a result, all who believe in him are made right with God [i.e. ‘saved’].

And this is exactly what Jesus is accusing these religious leaders of being guilty of—and why they refused to come to Him for eternal life.

Their religious zeal motivated by pride and self-righteousness had ‘inoculated’ them to the only cure for their sinful condition—the blood of Jesus Christ shed on Calvary’s cross.

But plain and simple, these men refused to come to Christ for eternal life because they thought they were righteous enough to *earn* it on their own.

At one-point, Saul of Tarsus believed that as well—until the Holy Spirit opened his eyes and he received Jesus as his Savior.

He recounts his pre and post conversion mindset on the subject—

**Philippians 3:4-9 (NLT2)**

<sup>4</sup> ...Indeed, if others have reason for confidence in their own efforts, I have even more! <sup>5</sup> I was circumcised when I was eight days old. I am a pure-blooded citizen of Israel and a member of the tribe of Benjamin—a real Hebrew if there ever was one! I was a member of the Pharisees, who demand the strictest obedience to the Jewish law. <sup>6</sup> I was so zealous that I harshly persecuted the church. And as for righteousness, I obeyed the law without fault. <sup>7</sup> I once thought these things were valuable, but now I consider them worthless because of what Christ has done. <sup>8</sup> Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I could gain Christ <sup>9</sup> and become one with him. I no longer count on my own righteousness through obeying the law; rather, I become righteous through faith in Christ. For God's way of making us right with himself depends on faith.

One pastor said—

*“...self-righteousness cannot save anyone, since “all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment” (Isa. 64:6) and because “whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all” (James 2:10). Thus, salvation comes not from “having a righteousness of [one’s] own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith” (Phil. 3:9; cf. Rom. 3:20–30).”*

The Lord Jesus went on to say—

**John 5:41 (NKJV)**

<sup>41</sup> **I do not receive honor from men.**

This takes us back to what the Lord said earlier in this passage that—the only testimony He needed and the only honor He wanted was the testimony of and honor from His Father.

**John 2:23-25 (NKJV)**

<sup>23</sup> Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name when they saw the signs which He did. <sup>24</sup> But Jesus did not commit Himself to them, because He knew all *men*, <sup>25</sup> and had no need that anyone should testify of man, for He knew what was in man.

**John 5:42 (NKJV)**

<sup>42</sup> **But I know you, that you do not have the love of God in you.**



**1 John 4:12-16 (NKJV)**

<sup>12</sup> No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us. <sup>13</sup> By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. <sup>14</sup> And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son *as* Savior of the world. <sup>15</sup> Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. <sup>16</sup> And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him.

The Lord Jesus knew that any respect from these Jewish leaders was worthless because—they did **“not have the love of God”** in their hearts.

One author summed verse 42 up—

*“Man’s failure to receive the Son of God is here traced back to its cause. These men did **not have the love of God** in them, that is, they loved themselves rather than God. If they had loved God, they would have received the One whom God had sent. By their rejection of the Lord Jesus, they showed their utter lack of **love** for His Father.”*

**John 5:43 (NKJV)**

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

Warren Wiersbe—

*“They did not honor the Son (John 5:23) because He did not honor them! Because they rejected the true Son of God who came in the Father’s name, they would one day accept a false messiah, the Antichrist, who would come in his own name (John 5:43; and see 2 Thess. 2; Rev. 13). If we reject that which is true, we will ultimately receive that which is false.”*

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

<sup>9</sup> This man [Antichrist] 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.

Tell the story of the observant Jew I met named Chaim who was looking for the coming of the Messiah based on 3 things—1. Bring peace; 2. Draw Jews back to Israel; 3. Rebuild the temple and restart sacrifices

**John 5:44 (NKJV)**

**<sup>44</sup> How can you believe, who receive honor from one another, and do not seek the honor that *comes* from the only God?**

Everything about the Pharisees was designed to get honor from men.

Everything from the way they dressed (with their large phylacteries), to the way they stood on the street corners and prayed (loud ostentatious prayers), to the way they gave their money to God ('blowing the trumpet')—even to where they sat at religious banquets and in the synagogues ('chief-seats').

This caused Jesus, at one point to say to these men, *"You like to appear righteous in public, but God knows your hearts. What this world honors is detestable in the sight of God."*  
(Luke 16:15—NLT2)

Author and historian William Barclay said with regard to the Scribes and Pharisees who were always comparing themselves with others to determine how righteous they were—

*"The point is not: 'Am I as good as my neighbor?' The point is: 'Am I as good as God?' The point is not: 'Is my scholarship and is my piety greater than that of other people whom I could name?' The point is: 'What do I look like to God?' So long as we judge ourselves by human comparisons there is plenty of room for self-satisfaction, and self-satisfaction kills faith, for faith is born of the sense of need. But when we compare ourselves with Jesus Christ, and through Him, with God, we are humbled to the dust, and then faith is born, for there is nothing left to do but to trust the mercy of God."*

**John 5:45-47 (NKJV)**

**<sup>45</sup> Do not think that I shall accuse you to the Father; there is *one* who accuses you--Moses, in whom you trust. <sup>46</sup> For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote about Me. <sup>47</sup> But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?"**

**"For he (Moses) wrote about Me"**—Where did Moses write about Jesus?—In many places, but here are a few:

1. *The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear.* (Deuteronomy 18:15)

2. *Then the LORD said to Moses, “Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a pole; and it shall be that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, shall live.” So Moses made a bronze serpent, and put it on a pole; and so it was, if a serpent had bitten anyone, when he looked at the bronze serpent, he lived. (Numbers 21:8–9; John 3:14–15)*
3. Jesus was typified in the rock that gave Israel water in the wilderness (Numbers 20:8–12 and 1 Corinthians 10:4).
4. The ministry of Jesus was shown in almost every aspect of the seven different kinds of offering that God commanded Israel to bring (Leviticus 1–7).

John Phillips—

*“The writings of Moses were full of types that depicted Christ: the ark of Noah, the offering of Isaac, the ladder of Jacob’s dream, the story of Joseph, the Passover lamb, the manna from heaven, the rock (that brought forth water in the wilderness), the serpent on the pole—to mention just a few. The writings of Moses contained one outstanding messianic prophecy known by heart by every Jew (Deuteronomy 18:15).*

*Jesus could well say, “Moses wrote of me.” He wrote of him repeatedly. But these people discounted all these types and prophecies of Christ. The indictment was clear, the consequence inevitable. To disbelieve the writings of Moses was to make any genuine faith in Christ impossible. Their case was hopeless if Moses, the great intercessor of the Old Testament (Exodus 32:30–33:17), became their great accuser. Their doom was sealed.”*

The whole point of John 5 has been to prove the divinity of Jesus Christ.

That is a truth that most Americans and pretty much all churchgoers already believe.

The Bible says, *“The fool says in their heart there is no God.”* (Ps. 14:1)

However, the greatest fool is the person who says they *do* believe in the God of the Bible and in His Son Jesus Christ—but then lives as if He is *not* real.

And more to the point—who lives contrary to what He has said in His Word thinking that they will never have to stand before Him and give an account of how they lived on the earth.

And yet, Jesus declared His divinity to these religious men—not because He was looking forward to judging them someday and sending them to hell—but to save them from hell.

**John 5:34 (NKJV)**

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

**John 3:16 (NKJV)**

<sup>16</sup> For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.