

Witnesses for the Defense

John 5:30-47

Thought for the Day: I believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, who came to give His life on the cross as the perfect sacrifice for my sins and the sins of the whole world. He is my only hope of eternal salvation!

In the discussion that followed Jesus' miraculous healing of an invalid, recorded in John 5, Jesus made some remarkable claims:

- 1) Vss. 17-18 – He claimed to be the Son of God, making Himself to be equal with God.
- 2) Vss. 21, 25-26 – He claimed that He had the power to raise the dead.
- 3) Vss. 22, 27-28 – He claimed the authority to be the Judge of all mankind.
- 4) Vs. 23 – He claimed that whoever does not honor Him, in fact, does not honor God.
- 5) Vs. 24 – He claimed that whoever listened to His message and believed it would receive God's gift of eternal life.

But what evidence could Jesus present to back up His claims? In John 5:30-47, Jesus presents Seven Witnesses who provide testimony concerning His Person and the Work He came to accomplish. Six of these witnesses are *Witnesses for the Defense* and one is a witness for the prosecution, a witness which Jesus demonstrated to be totally lacking in credibility.

I. The Testimony of Jesus Himself (5:30-31)

30 I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge, and my judgment is just, because I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me. 31 If I alone bear witness about myself, my testimony is not deemed true.

- In verse 31 Jesus acknowledges that His testimony about Himself is not deemed valid according to Jewish law (Deuteronomy 19:15). However, in verse 30, He explains why His testimony is, in fact, accurate and true. (Cp. John 5:19-20)
- His testimony was valid because He was completely dependent on and submissive to the will of His heavenly Father. He only said and did what His heavenly Father told Him to say and do.
 - Within the divine Trinity, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, always act together in concert with one another and never in contradiction to one another. Jesus could not and would not act on His own authority or by His own initiative.
 - Therefore, any claim He made, any testimony He gave concerning Himself was absolutely trustworthy, reliable, and true.
 - Cp. John 8:12-18 – His testimony concerning Himself was valid because: 1) It was true; and 2) It was confirmed by God the Father.

II. The Testimony of John the Baptist (5:32-35)

32 There is another who bears witness about me, and I know that the testimony that he bears about me is true. 33 You sent to John, and he has borne witness to the truth. 34 Not that the testimony that I receive is from man, but I say these things so that you may be saved. 35 He was a burning and shining lamp, and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light.

- Jesus was motivated by His desire for His listeners be saved (vs. 34).

- What was John the Baptist's testimony concerning Jesus Christ?
 - John 1:15, 30 – That Jesus existed from eternity past.
 - John 1:29 – That Jesus was the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.
 - John 1:32-33 – That Jesus was anointed by the Holy Spirit and that He baptizes with the Holy Spirit. (To baptize a person with the Holy Spirit is to impart eternal life to that person.)
 - John 1:34 – That Jesus is the Son of God; i.e., He is God in human flesh.
 - John 3:28 – That Jesus is the prophesied Messiah of the Old Testament.
 - John 3:31-34 – That Jesus came to earth from heaven and that He was sent by God.
 - John 3:34 – That Jesus was anointed and empowered by the Holy Spirit without measure.
 - John 3:35 – That God the Father had given all things into the hand of Jesus. (Matt. 28:18 – "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me...")
 - John 3:36 – That faith in Jesus Christ results in receiving His gift of eternal life.
- Jesus asserted, "I know that his [John the Baptist] testimony is true!"

III. The Testimony of Jesus' Works (5:36)

36 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 works that Jesus was doing, including His miracles and His teachings, were even greater than the testimony of John!
- They signified that He had been sent by God the Father and was, in fact, doing His work.

IV. The Testimony of God the Father (5:37-38)

37 And the Father who sent me has himself borne witness about me. His voice you have never heard, his form you have never seen, [Jesus' claim was that He had both heard God's voice and seen His form] 38 and you do not have his word abiding in you, for you do not believe the one whom he has sent.

- If they were listening to God, and His Word was abiding in their hearts, then they would recognize Jesus for who He was, the Messiah of God.
- What was the Father's testimony concerning Jesus?
 - [At His baptism] Matthew 3:16-17 – "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."
 - [On the Mount of Transfiguration] Matthew 17:5 – "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him."
 - [Before His crucifixion] John 12:27-31 – "Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven: "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again."
 - [By means of His resurrection] Romans 1:1-4 – God the Father raised Jesus from the dead and thereby "...declared [Him] to be the Son of God in power... by his resurrection from the dead..."

V. The Testimony of the Scriptures (5:39-40)

39 You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, 40 yet you refuse to come to me that

you may have life.

- The Jewish scribes devoted their lives to studying the Scriptures but sadly, not for the purpose of knowing God. They were driven by legalism, by a works-salvation rather than a faith-salvation.
- Rightly understood, all of the O.T. Scriptures bear witness to the Lord Jesus Christ and point to Him as the Messiah, the Savior of the world, even as John the Baptist testified.

VI. The Testimony of the Religious Leaders (5:41-44) (Witnesses for the Prosecution)

41 I do not receive glory from people. 42 But I know that you do not have the love of God within you. 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 do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?

- What was the testimony of the religious leaders?
- Jesus very quickly demonstrates why their testimony was not credible:
 - They did not love God, nor were they channels of His love to others.
 - They loved their religion, but they did not love their God. Their religion actually hindered people from coming to know the Lord.
 - They rejected their Messiah, the Son of God, who had come in the name of the Father.
 - They received false (political) Messiahs (and will do so again in the future).
"Very likely Jesus was referring to other persons who claimed to be the Messiah. Because they fit the mistaken image of what the Messiah was supposed to accomplish (political liberation), people eagerly received them. Many men made such a claim." (*The Life Application Commentary Series*)
 - They valued the approval and acceptance of men rather than the approval of God.

VII. The Testimony of Moses (5:45-47)

45 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. 46 If you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me. 47 But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words?

- The writings of Moses could not save them, but they pointed to the One who could—the Lord Jesus Christ.
- Their hope in the Scriptures was misplaced because they did not accept the One to whom the Scriptures testified.

There is adequate testimony that Jesus is who He claimed to be and that He came to accomplish the work of God through His sinless life, sacrificial death, and victorious resurrection from the dead.

What is your testimony concerning Jesus Christ? Be careful how you answer! Your own testimony will either justify you or condemn you before the Lord. Jesus said in Matthew 12:36-37 – "I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned." Remember, "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks." (Matthew 12:34)