

John 5:30-37 "The Different Witnesses of Christ"

JOH 5:30-37 "By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me. 31 "If I testify about myself, my testimony is not valid. 32 There is another who testifies in my favor, and I know that his testimony about me is valid. 33 "You have sent to John and he has testified to the truth. 34 Not that I accept human testimony; but I mention it that you may be saved. 35 John was a lamp that burned and gave light, and you chose for a time to enjoy his light. 36 "I have testimony weightier than that of John. For the very work that the Father has given me to finish, and which I am doing, testifies that the Father has sent me. 37 And the Father who sent me has himself testified concerning me. You have never heard his voice nor seen his form..."

Up to this point in chapter five Jesus has been explaining to the Jews, who want to kill Him for healing on the Sabbath, that He is doing the Father's work because He and the Father are of the same essence. In other words, Jesus has declared that He is God as we saw last week in verse 26.

JOH 5:26 "For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself."

Which is to say, that Jesus didn't derive His life from anyone; He always was and will always be. He is eternal, just as the Father and the Holy Spirit are eternal, being the same God in three distinct persons.

And so, as we come to our text this morning you'll notice that Jesus is going to now introduce a number of witnesses who will testify to the truth of who He is. He does this for the sake of the Jews who are accustomed to having others testify so as to bring validity to the claims a person makes, as in a court of Law for example.

But before moving to the varied witnesses, our Lord first reiterates what He had clearly stated earlier in this chapter.

JOH 5:30 "By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me."

A couple of things to be noted here.

1) This is in the context of Jesus judging the world as the Father has given Him all judgment. This kind of judgment is reserved only for God. And since Jesus Christ is God the Son this is well within His boundaries, and the Jews would have fully understood the claims Jesus was making with this statement.

2) The second point concerning verse 30 has to do with something we've already dealt with in a previous study and that has to do with what we see here in the beginning of verse 30 which states, "By myself I can do nothing..."

Some have concluded that if Jesus cannot act independently then He is necessarily not God since this intimates that He is dependent on someone other than Himself.

As we saw previously this does not show weakness but consistency of the very nature of God who cannot deny Himself. Since Jesus and the Father are One then it would be impossible for Jesus to act by Himself. It would be impossible for them to do anything independent of each other. Thus the negative statement, "I can do nothing by Myself", can be said positively, 'I do everything with the Father.'

And so, the will of the Father and the will of the Son, together with the will of the Holy Spirit are identical, though their function in our redemption is not identical. For example, the Father did not die on the cross, the Son died in our place for our sin. But it was the Father who sent the Son.

The Holy Spirit did not send the Son, but it was the Holy Spirit who empowered the Son to do the work of the Father as the Holy Spirit also regenerates men to receive the free gift of eternal life the Son purchased for us at Calvary.

What confuses our little finite minds is how there can be one God with one will, and yet be three separate persons who have different functions, if you will, as it pertains to our salvation?

Well, if I could fully explain that aspect of God I would probably be touring the world promoting my new book on the subject. Suffice it to say, no human being can fully understand, let alone explain the triune God beyond what the Scriptures clearly teach concerning the oneness and the plurality of the one true God.

And because Jesus knows that human beings have a tough time with such concepts He comes alongside the Jews of His day and

uses this concept of witnesses who testify in favor of the one in question who makes such claims as He does.

JOH 5:31 "If I testify about myself, my testimony is not valid. 32 There is another who testifies in my favor, and I know that his testimony about me is valid."

Now, keep in mind here that Jesus is not saying that He ceases to be who He is if a mere human being doesn't testify about the validity of His deity. He is reasoning with human beings who understand the logic of witnesses in a legal setting; witnesses who are credible to testify of the truth.

In fact, later in this same gospel the Jews point this out to Jesus who appears to them to be testifying of Himself without someone else being able to corroborate His testimony. But He answers as only God could.

JOH 8:13-14 "The Pharisees challenged him, "Here you are, appearing as your own witness; your testimony is not valid." 14 Jesus answered, "Even if I testify on my own behalf, my testimony is valid, for I know where I came from and where I am going. But you have no idea where I come from or where I am going."

In other words, 'I am God and there is none besides Me. I created you, not the other way around. And long before I created you I bore testimony of myself because I can. I don't need anyone else to validate Me. I validate Myself, because I validate all creation, including you who now question your very Creator.'

But back in our text Jesus points out that there are other legitimate witnesses they must recognize.

JOH 5:32 "There is another who testifies in my favor, and I know that his testimony about me is valid."

This is the first witness Jesus points to in this section. And the question we ought to ask ourselves here is, who is this witness?

Now, we might be tempted to connect verse 32 with verse 33 and conclude that it is John the Baptist being spoken of in verse 32. But this would not be the best approach. The context has Jesus declaring that He does not act independently of the will of the Father.

In fact, you'll notice what verse 32 does not say. It does not say, "there is one who testifies in my favor...", as though this witness is outside of His own sphere. Rather, it says, "There is another who

testifies in my favor..." Another? Yes, an additional person, not a foreign person in the sense that this witness is foreign to His Godhood.

Therefore, it is consistent that the first witness would be of the same nature, another person of the Godhead, the One who has sent the Son who is now doing the will of the Father. And so, Jesus calls on the Father to be that witness; the same Father the Jews agree is the one true God. And so, if they are to accept the witness of the Father they must accept Jesus, is the reasoning.

And by the way, in what way did the Father bear witness of the Son? Some have suggested that this is in reference to when the Father said of Jesus at His baptism, where a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." (MAT 3:17)

This would certainly be an instance of a witness, but as we'll see this is not the primary witness the Jews were confronted with or that is being referred to here. We'll deal with that in a moment.

But, so as not to eliminate the possibility that a human being has seen and heard and can testify concerning the will of the Father found in Jesus Christ, our Lord adds a witness these Jews can certainly identify with.

JOH 5:33-35 "You have sent to John and he has testified to the truth. 34 Not that I accept human testimony; but I mention it that you may be saved. 35 John was a lamp that burned and gave light, and you chose for a time to enjoy his light."

Now, what is Jesus referring to here? Well, you might remember that when John the Baptist came on to the scene there was an uproar in Jerusalem. Some accepted him as a prophet, others accepted him as maybe Elijah come back to this earth, or maybe even the Messiah.

There was confusion and excitement among the Jews. And so, what did the rulers in Israel do? They went to John and checked him out.

JOH 1:19-27 "Now this was John's testimony when the Jews of Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him who he was. 20 He did not fail to confess, but confessed freely, "I am not the Christ." 21 They asked him, "Then who are you? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" He answered, "No." 22 Finally they said, "Who are you? Give us an answer to take back to

those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" 23 John replied in the words of Isaiah the prophet, "I am the voice of one calling in the desert, 'Make straight the way for the Lord.'" 24 Now some Pharisees who had been sent 25 questioned him, "Why then do you baptize if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?" 26 "I baptize with water," John replied, "but among you stands one you do not know. 27 He is the one who comes after me, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie."

Now, keep in mind that Jesus in our immediate text is introducing witnesses who bear testimony of Him. What we just read in John 1:19-27 is John's testimony of who he is and who Jesus is. He says, that he is a voice crying in the wilderness who introduces one who is greater than himself; one whose sandals he is not worthy to untie.

In reminding these Jews, back in our text, of John's testimony, Jesus is saying to them that if you have accepted John's testimony then you must accept the one he came to testify about, and that is none other than the one you are now accusing of being a heretic because of a healing done on the Sabbath.

In fact, Jesus reminds them that many of them did in fact accept the testimony of John, or at least the ministry of John who was sent by God to call people to repentance along with pointing them to the One they must accept as they repent.

This is why our Lord adds, "not that I accept human testimony; but I mention it that you may be saved." (JOH 5:34)

Here Jesus says that I don't need a human being to lend credibility to Myself and My ministry of reconciliation. But I am gracious enough to give you such a witness with the express purpose of coming to Me so that you can be saved. Here again the grace of God abounds to people who are not seeking Him as the Savior, but who are seeking to put Him to death.

This brings to mind the apostle Paul who himself was an enemy of Christ and yet was shown mercy as we all have.

ROM 5:8-11 "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. 9 Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! 10 For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved

through his life! 11 Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation."

Amazing grace, how sweet the sound. And yet, these Jews who want to kill Jesus do not have ears to hear despite the fact that they say they believe John's testimony.

JOH 5:35 "John was a lamp that burned and gave light, and you chose for a time to enjoy his light."

This is a reference to what we read way back in the first chapter of the gospel of John.

JOH 1:7-8 "He [John the Baptist] came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him [Jesus] all men might believe. 8 He [John the Baptist] himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light."

What Jesus is saying in our text is that John was not the source of light, though he certainly was a lamp through which the light could shine. In other words, John was a conduit of truth as He bore witness to who that truth is, Jesus Christ.

And then Jesus reminds these Jews that they accepted John's testimony of the light, and his ministry which pointed to the true light as he says at the end of verse 35, "and you chose for a time to enjoy his light"; that is the light which shone in the darkness and revealed the will of God in the Son.

They enjoyed that in the sense that many of them identified with John's ministry and were caught up in all of the excitement of Israel's possible restoration as promised in the Scriptures, as they understood that.

Again, this is an indictment as to how fickle these Jews were. They were willing to accept the light as long as it didn't conflict with their preconceived ideas as to who the Messiah would be.

And this is the same indictment of the world today which includes not only Jews but all people who try and create a god in their own image, or who try and impose their will on the revealed will of God found in the word.

The world doesn't mind if we talk about God and Jesus Christ as long as we don't make the claim that He is the only way of salvation. Once we conclude that there is only one light then we

become a target in a sense. We are labeled as radicals, or fundamentalists, or inflexible extremists.

This is one reason the world can celebrate Christmas without acknowledging Jesus Christ as the only Savior. Instead they use the time to celebrate peace on earth and good will toward men. They use the time to celebrate family and unity. They like the traditions of Christmas, but they rejoice in the light only in the sense that it is one light among many.

That's not the witness we bring to the world during Christmas or any time of the year. Our witness is that of John the Baptist's who boldly testifies that Jesus is the only light in whom men may find salvation.

But even if we didn't testify to the truth of who Jesus is it wouldn't change the facts. Though God uses human witnesses He ultimately is His own witness. And if He chooses He'll raise up any witness who will serve His will and purpose as was seen in the statement our Lord made to the Jews who rebuked His disciples for claiming Jesus as King.

LUK 19:38-40 "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!" 39 Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples!" 40 "I tell you," he replied, "if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out."

God will always have a witness. And the irony here in our text is that the Jews consistently rejected His witnesses, despite the fact that our Lord consistently continued to give His witness because of His love for His people. And John was a witness that burned for Christ.

I love that expression, "to burn for Christ." It really points to the attitude we all should have for our Lord and that is a witness who shines in such a way where we burn bright and with the light that He has given us with the new life we have in Him.

People in this world are willing to burn their lives out for a lot of things: fortune, fame, their favorite football team. They expend a great deal of time and energy for those things they deem important and yet how willing are the children of God, (that holy nation Peter refers to in his first epistle), willing to burn their lives out to the end for their God and Creator and Savior?

If there is anything in this world worth burning out for I can't think of anything more important than the God who gives eternal life. The Jews were willing to bask in John's light for a time, but once he was taken into custody all of a sudden everyone was asking if he were really on the right track since God didn't seem to come to his rescue.

And Jesus points out that though John the Baptist burned bright for the Lord He has a testimony which is greater than even John's.

JOH 5:36 "I have testimony weightier than that of John. For the very work that the Father has given me to finish, and which I am doing, testifies that the Father has sent me."

We may not think of the works of Christ as being a witness but they are. In a court of law the works people do or don't do testify all of the time to their innocence or guilt. And in the case of our Lord His works speak to His person and ministry.

What Jesus is saying in verse 36 is that though John's witness is true and important there is nothing like the witness of the One of whom he came to testify. In this way the works of Jesus are weightier or greater than the words of John.

And what Jesus is doing in making this statement to the Jews is once again taking the attention away from a human witness, in this case, and directing the attention back to Himself. After all He is standing right in front of them and His own testimony is more than sufficient for these people. They don't need to look any further than Jesus.

And evidently these Jews were more than aware of the works of Jesus. Keep in mind that it was a work of Jesus which has precipitated this encounter in the first place. And that's really the point. The works that Jesus was doing are the very works which these Jews were rejecting because it didn't conform to their view of the law, which in their little world didn't allow acts of mercy on the Sabbath.

And so, Jesus is making it clear that their rejection of His works is really a rejection of God's testimony given to them. To reject the works of Jesus is to reject the works of the Father who sent Him. Another indictment against the people who claim God as their Father.

JOH 5:37 "And the Father who sent me has himself testified concerning me. You have never heard his voice nor seen his form..."

This goes back to what I brought up earlier when I asked the question, how did the Father testify of the Son in relation to verse 32?, which states, "there is another who testifies in my favor, and I know that his testimony about me is valid."

Now keep in mind the verse we have before us. It raises the issue of the Father testifying of the Son and then it says, "You have never heard his voice nor seen his form..."

This is a reference to the nation of Israel in general. This is a reference to the relationship the Father has with men and that is a relationship which has always been through the Son who explains the Father and reveals the Father. The apostle John points this out in the beginning of this gospel.

JOH 1:18 "No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known."

And so, verse 37 of our text is addressing a general truth about the work of the Father as it applies to the people He has called out to be His own. And yet we're told at the beginning of verse 37, "... the Father who sent me has himself testified concerning me."

Well, if He has not audibly spoken or shown Himself in years past to this world, in a way where human beings can view Him with their eyes, how has He testified concerning His Son?

Well, the answer is actually quite simple. The Father's testimony of the Son has come through the prophets He has sent to Israel who have always pointed to the Son as the Messiah.

From the very beginning of man's redemptive history after his sin, God has spoken to men through His word. It was the word which came to Adam and Eve and promised them a Redeemer born of a woman. And by word I mean not just the words of God, but the person who delivered those words, who is known as the Word, Jesus Christ.

This is one more reason we know that all throughout the history of men, whenever God revealed Himself to men it was always through the One whose job it is to be the revealer of the Father and that is the Son.

Whenever God walked in the Garden in the cool of the day, either before or after the fall of Adam and Eve, it was the Son who walked among them. Whenever we see manifestations of God in the Old Testament, like that of the burning bush with Moses, or the pillar of fire by night among Israel in the desert, it was always the Son who revealed the Father.

When the Lord appeared to Shadrach, Meshac and Abednego in the burning furnace, it was the Son of God who stood there with them in the flames. Or when the Lord revealed Himself to Abraham on different occasions it was the Son of God who appeared to him.

This is why Jesus could say to the Jews in JOH 8:56-58 "Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad." "You are not yet fifty years old," the Jews said to him, "and you have seen Abraham!" "I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "before Abraham was born, I am!"

Yes, Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing the day of the Christ and he saw it and the Jews couldn't believe that Jesus was identifying Himself with being that One Abraham longed to see since Jesus wasn't even fifty years old. Keep in mind that Abraham met the Son of God over 2,000 years prior to Jesus coming on to the scene.

But, the very word of God, revealed to men through the prophets, is the very word which spoke of the Messiah. This is the Father's testimony of the Son Jesus refers to in our text. And it is this testimony Jesus points out to His disciples. We see this clearly after His resurrection when He appeared to two of His disciples who were mourning over His death.

LUK 24:25-27 "He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! 26 Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" 27 And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself."

This is the testimony you and I have. We have the testimony of God the Father as it was given through His prophets. But these words given to the prophets also addressed the works of the One the Father would send, and Jesus is simply acknowledging that He is the One who is accomplishing these works on behalf of the Father for His people.

And if it's good enough for the Father to reveal to the world His Son, through works that identify Him as being sent from the Father, it should be good enough for us to study and meditate upon, to learn and to share with the world who our Lord Jesus Christ is.

Jesus points this out later in this gospel.

John 10:37-38 ³⁷ "If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me; ³⁸ but if I do them, though you do not believe Me, believe the works, so that you may know and understand that the Father is in Me, and I in the Father."

But the works Jesus does on behalf of the Father all stem from what the Father gave to Israel in His word which is sufficient.

2PE 1:19 "And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts."

This is the word that should shine in our lives as we shine forth as witnesses for our Lord Jesus. And yet, despite how we shine for Christ only God can illumine the hearts of people to receive the word of God and the Word who became flesh as we read in verse 38.

JOH 5:38 "nor does his word dwell in you, for you do not believe the one he sent."

We'll pick up here next week and pick up on this truth. But may it never be said of us, either through what we say or do, that His word does not dwell in us. May our Lord Jesus be seen dwelling in us through His Spirit and may His life abound in us so that the world could never make that statement.

May we be doers of the exhortation Paul gave the Colossians.

COL 3:16-17 "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. 17 And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."