

John 5:30-47
Three Good Reasons to Believe in Jesus

Introduction: The key focus of John's Gospel concerns the question, *Who is Jesus?*¹ The answer John repeatedly gave, from the very beginning, is that Jesus is God in human form:

ESV **John 1:1** In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

ESV **John 1:14** And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory . . .

ESV **John 1:18** No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.

All this is, of course, evidence for the doctrine of the Trinity (one God, three persons).

Today's Lesson: John 5:30-47 picks up in the middle of a confrontation between Jesus and the Pharisees. In it, Jesus claimed He should be honored "just as" (5:22-23a) the Father is honored—a clear claim to deity. The Son of God is God the Son. In 5:30-47, Jesus presented the Pharisees with three ways the Father testified to Jesus' true identity. The Father bore testimony through:

- 1) Sending John the Baptist (5:32-35).
- 2) The works that the Father gave Jesus to do (5:36-38).
- 3) The writings of Moses (5:39-47).

—5:30—

******What can we learn about Jesus' motives from 5:30?** *See 5:19.* Jesus truly was a man on a mission, a man sent from God. Jesus He came not to seek His own desires or interests, but only those of God the Father. Jesus laid aside His purgatives as deity, and lived life as God intended man to live.

What judgment had Jesus just been talking about (5:30)? *See back to 5:22-23, 25-29.* Jesus claimed to have authority from the Father to be the supreme judge of all the world at the end of the age—a clear claim to deity.

—5:31-35—

******Whose light did the Pharisees rejoice in "for a while" (5:33-35)?** They temporarily rejoiced in the light of John the Baptist.

Historical Corroboration: The first century Jewish historian Josephus recorded considerable messianic excitement due to John the Baptist's ministry.²

¹ Carson, *John*, 95.

² Carson, *John*, 261.

John's Testimony: These same men Jesus was speaking to had sent to John to find out what he had to say (5:33). John the Baptist was a witness concerning Jesus' true identity. He gave testimony about Jesus:

ESV **John 1:37** [John speaking] "I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God."

John's Mission: Causing people to believe in Jesus was the reason God sent John the Baptist:

ESV **John 1:7** He [John] came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him.

Look at what Jesus said in 5:31. In a courtroom, why is an accused person's plea of innocence not the end of the trial? People who would commit a crime would typically have no qualms lying about it. Judges are not naïve. They realize that an accused person might not be telling the truth.

The Situation: If accepting Jesus' claim to deity depended solely on His own self attestation, his testimony had reason to be doubted.

ESV **John 8:13-14a** . . . the Pharisees said to him, "You are bearing witness about yourself; your testimony is not true." Jesus answered, "Even if I do bear witness about myself, my testimony is true . . ."

Who was Jesus talking about in 5:32? See 5:36. On the surface, it seems to have been John the Baptist. John the Baptist was indeed a witness who testified about Jesus (5:33-35). "But" (5:36) the person Jesus actually meant bore even greater testimony than John was the person who sent John. Jesus' key witness was God the Father (5:36).

ESV **John 8:17-18** . . . In your Law it is written that the testimony of two men is true. I am the one who bears witness about myself, and the Father who sent me bears witness about me."

According to 5:34, why did Jesus call John the Baptist to the witness stand? Jesus reminded them of this, "so that" you (the Pharisees) might be saved (5:34). There was evidently hope for some of these Pharisees after all. For example, Nicodemus evidently came to faith in Jesus, as did others:

ESV **John 12:42** . . . many even of the authorities believed in him . . .

In evangelism, it is possible to win an argument and lose the soul. Jesus' goal was not to win an argument; it was to save souls (5:34).

Based on 5:35, the Pharisees no longer rejoiced in John's light ("for a while"). What changed? Though John the author did not record it, John had been arrested, and then martyred. Sadly, the Pharisees were like moths attracted to a light that quickly disappear back into the darkness when the light goes out. They only rejoiced in John "for a while" (5:35).

ESV **James 1:23-24** . . . if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like.

ESV **Isaiah 55:6** Seek the LORD while he may be found; call upon him while he is near . . .

—5:36-38—

******Sometimes people debate what language we'll speak in heaven. Some say Hebrew since the Old Testament is written in Hebrew. Others vote for Greek since the New Testament is in Greek. Based on 5:36-39, when the Father bore testimony about Jesus, what language did He speak?** Jesus pointed out that the Pharisees had never heard the Father's voice nor seen His form. Instead, the way the Father testified to them about Jesus was through the works He enabled Jesus to do. *Actions speak louder than words.*

Works" (5:36): Jesus' "works" authenticate His claim to Deity. For example, it is easy to merely claim to be the Messiah; anyone could claim anything. However, to claim to be the Messiah and then to perform mighty signs and miracles would serve to validate/substantiate one's claim.

ESV **John 5:36b** . . . the works that the Father has given me to accomplish . . . bear witness about me that the Father has sent me.

ESV **John 10:24-25** . . . the Jews gathered around him and said to him . . . "If you are the Christ, tell us plainly." Jesus answered them . . . "The works that I do in my Father's name bear witness about me . . ."

ESV **John 15:24** If I had not done among them the works that no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin, but now they have seen and hated both me and my Father.

In 5:38, what proved that the Pharisees did not have the Father's word abiding in them?
Jesus could tell "for" (because) they did not believe the one whom the Father sent.

—5:39-40—

******What tragedy did Jesus point out in 5:39-40?** The tragedy is that the Scriptures point to Jesus as the source of life, yet they refused to come to Jesus for life.

Application: The Scriptures rightly reveal the plan of salvation to us. However, we are not saved by the plan of salvation; we are saved by the Man of Salvation (Jesus). It has been said that many will miss heaven by 18"—the distance between their heads and their hearts. We must press beyond the written word of God to the Living Word of God (Jesus).

Is 5:39a a criticism, a commendation or a command? See 5:40. Jesus was not commanding them to search the Scripture; they were known for that. Thus, it should be read as a present indicative verb.³ Neither, however, was it a commendation. The Pharisees searched the Scriptures to obtain information about eternal life—Scriptures which point to Jesus—and they failed to see Him there. Thus, it was criticism.

ESV **Matthew 23:24** You blind guides, straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel!

ESV **2 Corinthians 3:15** . . . to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their hearts.

The Pharisees were religious hypocrites, like many today who are keen on Bible study but woefully short on applying it to their own lives. Paul warned Timothy of people who were:

ESV **2 Timothy 3:7** always learning and never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth.

—5:41-44—

******How did the Pharisees show that they did not have the love of God within them (5:41-44)?** Two things revealed their lack of love. First, the fact that they did not receive Jesus, who came in the Father’s name, proved that they did not have the love of the Father within them (5:43). Second, they were seeking glory from each other (5:44).

What would a good synonym be for “glory” (5:41)? It is from *doxa* (“doxology”) and here a good synonym would be “praise”.⁴

What is the main idea of 5:41? See 5:44. Jesus’ sole goal was to please the Father. He was not in the least bit interested in receiving glory from the Pharisees. In contrast, the Pharisees were actively seeking glory from each other (5:44). They were the polar opposite of Jesus in that regard.

ESV **John 12:43** . . . they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God.

ESV **Matthew 23:2-7** The scribes and the Pharisees . . . do all their deeds to be seen by others . . . they love the place of honor at feasts and the best seats in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces and being called rabbi by others.

“Love of God” (5:42): Did Jesus mean that the Pharisees did not have love for God, or did He mean that the Pharisees did not have love from God (5:42)? It could be taken either way.

a) If the Pharisees had their own love for the Father, then because the Father loves the Son, they would have loved the Son, too.

b) It is a fact that God the Father loves God the Son:

ESV **John 5:20** . . . the Father loves the Son . . .

³ Hendriksen, *John*, 209.

⁴ Raymond Brown, *The Gospel According to John I-XII*, 2nd ed. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983), 225.

If the Pharisees had love from God within them, then they would have loved the Son, too.

Determining Factor: In light of 5:38 (the word of God), it is probably love from God that Jesus meant. God's love, like God's word, must permeate a person in order for him to recognize Jesus as the Christ.⁵

ESV 1 **John 4:19** We love because he first loved us.

What did it mean for Jesus to come in the Father's "name" (5:43a)? It is similar to a policeman saying, "Stop in the name of the law" (the law has no name per se). It means that Jesus came in the authority of God the Father and represented all that was true of the Father (the Father's character).⁶ This was so true of Jesus that He could say:

ESV **John 14:9** Whoever has seen me has seen the Father . . .

The Jewish leaders did not simply reject Jesus. They also rejected the testimony of God the Father.

ESV 1 **John 5:9-12** If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater, for this is the testimony of God that he has borne concerning his Son . . . Whoever does not believe God has made him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has borne concerning his Son.

What inconsistency did Jesus point out in 5:43? *Contrast with 5:31.* Jesus came in the Father's name, and they rejected Him. Others would come later in their own names, and the Pharisees foolishly received them as legitimate (in contrast with 5:31). These coming false Messiahs would be lacking the formidable credentials that Jesus had.

Example: Imagine a young Christian woman praying to God to send her a husband. Scripture teaches she should only marry another believer—someone who can lead her in the things of the Lord. God finally sent her such a man. However, about the same time, she meets a tall, dark, handsome millionaire who is a complete pagan. Rejecting the advances of the Christian, she opts for the pagan, despite what Scripture teaches. This is essentially what the leadership of Judea did.

How was 5:43b fulfilled in history? After killing Jesus, others falsely presented themselves as the Christ, leading many astray and fracturing Judaism into competing camps. These false Messiahs eventually incited Judea to revolt against Rome and defeat the Roman skeleton army stationed there. The Jews then turned on each other as various factions followed different false Messiahs. Finally, the Romans gathered their armies and counter attacked, destroying the Jewish nation in A.D. 70.

—5:45—

******What unexpected accuser will the Pharisees face (5:45-47)?** Moses—the one on whom they had set their hope—will testify against them on judgment day.

⁵ Brown, *John*, 226.

⁶ Dennis & Grudem, *ESV Study*, 2033.

In what sense had the Pharisees set their hope on Moses (5:45)? They searched his writings and prided themselves in living by it. They evidently thought their obedience to Moses' teachings would lead to eternal life.

—5:46-47—

******Why did Jesus conclude that they didn't really believe Moses (5:46)?** Moses wrote of Jesus. Thus, if they really believed Moses' writings, they would have believed in Jesus. Thus, Moses will stand in outraged accusation against them.⁷

Example: Jesus told the story of a poor named Lazarus who died and went to Paradise, and of a rich man who died and went to torment. The rich man begged Father Abraham to send Lazarus back to warn his five brothers lest they end up in torment also. Abraham said:

ESV **Luke 16:31** . . . if they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.

Apologetics: God the Father raised up ancient Israel to prepare a people for the coming of Jesus. He first convinced them to believe Moses, and then Moses wrote of the coming of Jesus. The Law of Moses was designed to point the Israelites to Jesus. Much of the apostles' evangelism consisted of going into the synagogues and using the Hebrew Scriptures to convince them to believe in Jesus.

ESV **Romans 3:1-2** Then what advantage has the Jew? . . . Much in every way. To begin with, the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God.

ESV **Romans 9:4-5** . . . to them [Israelites] belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises. To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen.

Summary of Their Unbelief:

- a) The proof that they didn't have God's word abiding in them was that they didn't believe Jesus' claim to be the Messiah (5:38).
- b) The proof that they didn't love God was that they didn't receive Jesus for who He really was (5:42-43).
- c) The proof that they did not believe Moses was that they didn't believe Jesus (5:46).

Theological Liberals: It is interesting that Jesus, unlike many modern liberal theologians, believed that Moses was the author of the Law. In the 1800s, around the time of Charles Darwin, some academic, theological liberals in England devised a scheme to undermine orthodox Christianity by discrediting the writings of Moses, specifically the first eleven chapters of Genesis. They reasoned that if they could get rid of the first Adam (as mythological), there would be no need for the last Adam (Jesus). To do this, they heavily promoted Darwin's theory of evolution. To try to make Genesis 1-11 appear compatible with millions of years of evolution, they pitched the idea that what Genesis 1-11 was only symbolic, not actual history. They correctly reasoned that if they undermined the foundation, the super structure will fall.

⁷ Carson, *John*, 266.

So What?

Why did John the Apostle record this conversation between Jesus and the Pharisees— what point did he want to make to the unbelieving Jews who originally read this? John recorded this incident with the leaders because it shows their growing, irrational opposition to Jesus. Despite overwhelming divine evidence, they rejected Jesus. It was a deliberate disbelief. The problem was not intellect; it was stubborn pride and love of self more than the Father.⁸ John did not want his readers to make the same mistake. Here is the application for everyone:

- 1) *Is Jesus right about who He claims to be?*
- 2) *If He is right, what have you done about it?*⁹

This was written by John the Apostle, an eye witness to everything we are reading. John was there! Either it is true or it is not. Either this really happened, or it did not. Are you ready to call John a liar? A religious charlatan?

Secondary Applications:

1) The Pharisees, who were outwardly religious men, did not honor God's word nor did they have the love of God in their hearts. May God save us from the same deception!

2) Examine how you use the Bible:

Is it to impress others or is it causing you to grow in humility and in love for God?

Do you gladly embrace who God is as He is revealed in all of Scripture, rather than who you may want Him to be? (Your own little pet god, a god of your own imagination).

3) Ask yourself whether you're seeking praise from other people as opposed to seeking to please God on the heart level.

ESV **James 4:4** Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

4) Examine whether you take pride in your outward religious performance rather than boasting in Christ and the cross.¹⁰

**** = Ask this question before reading the text. This will engage people's minds and focus their attention.

You can hear this lesson being taught at SermonAudio.com/NTRF.

Stephen E. Atkerson NTRF.org 08/19/19

⁸ Brown, *John*, 228.

⁹ Bob Deffinbaugh, "13. Like Father, Like Son (John 5:19-30)". Bible.org. Accessed August 02, 2019.

¹⁰ Cole, "Lesson 30".