

John 5:31-47 Notes  
 August 19, 2007  
 L. Walker

In John 5...

- Ø Jesus committed the heinous crime of healing (working) on the Sabbath, a man who had been lame for 38 years.
- Ø Had the man been able to be the first one into the pool of Bethesda, God would have healed him and that would have been okay.
- Ø So, Jesus reasons with the self-righteous Jews that since healing is God's work and not man's, then it was okay to heal on the Sabbath.
- Ø This explanation of Jesus' only added insult to injury because in saying what he did, he claimed equality with God: yet another capital offense.
- Ø Jesus then very comfortably and calmly explains that he is the Son of God by nature (essence), and that he and the Father are in complete harmony and unison in abilities, power, and purpose, and that the Father has even deferred and conferred certain activities from Himself to the Son that only God performs, such as: judging the world, giving physical and spiritual life, and honor.
- Ø This is a neat and powerful passage!
  - Jesus provokes the Jewish leaders by healing the most incredibly invalid man available on the Sabbath.
  - His purpose: to save them!
  - Here we see the astounding theme continued from the OT: God's never-ending pursuit of and love for Israel.
  - This is a salvation message and invitation to all listeners there along with the Jewish leaders wrapped up in a beautiful legal defense that just happens to reveal the true nature of Christ – Bravo God! 3 in one!
- Ø This is just like the patient, kind and steadfast Jr. High teacher who has to explain to her kids that she is there for them, and not vice versa, for their benefit and gain.
  - v. 17 Jesus addresses them (he cares).
  - v. 20 – “that ye may marvel.”
  - v. 24 how to be saved (why?), have eternal life, stir their hearts.
  - v. 25-29 Judgment is coming. And we'll continue to see...
  - v. 34 I say these things that “ye might be saved.”
  - v. 40 “ye might have life.”
  - v. 42-47 “unless ye be born again, ye cannot be saved.”
- Ø Jesus makes some amazing claims in John 5:
  - He is the Son of God in his essence or nature.
  - He has been sent by the Father.
  - He is the source of all life (physical and spiritual).
  - He is the Judge of all the world.
  - He is the raiser of the dead (both) and the one who will empty the “graves” one day.
- Ø “People listened with open-mouthed amazement as Jesus made these incredible claims.” And I'm sure they had strong doubts.
- Ø So Jesus knowing their minds and hearts, proceeds to give them proof or credentials in the manner required by the Jewish law, with witnesses. Deut 19:15, Matt 18:16 – “Out of the mouths of 2 or 3 witnesses let every word be established.”
  - It's amazing the way our legal system is based on the Bible's teachings, huh? 10 Commandments, presupposition, property – stealing, witnesses, etc.

Read John 5:31-47

- Ø Jesus' summary of his nature, v. 30, transitions right into his bringing forth the witnesses. This is the defense's opening statement. Read v. 30. In essence, “By accusing me, you are accusing the Father as well.”

**John 5 {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.**

Bring forth the witnesses for corroboration:

**John 5 {31} If I alone bear witness about myself, my testimony is not deemed true. {32} There is another who bears witness about me, and I know that the testimony that he bears about me is true.**

v. 31, 32: The 1<sup>st</sup> witness is Jesus himself. He has already testified, but his testimony alone is not valid (that's what he means by "not true" – or not sufficient) because he is the defendant.

- Ø John 8:14a: Jesus answered, "Even if I do bear witness about myself, my testimony is true, for I know where I came from and where I am going."
- Ø Consistently, God does not ask us to hinge our faith or trust on 1 piece of evidence...He gives us 10,000!
- Ø Jesus says, "but I have more witnesses than just me."

**John 5 {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.**

v. 33-35: The 2<sup>nd</sup> witness is John the Baptist.

- Ø John announced Jesus as Messiah – John 1:23
- Ø John announced Jesus to be "the Lamb of God." John 1:29
- Ø John announced Jesus to be the "Baptizer with the Holy Spirit"
- Ø John announced Jesus to be the "Son of God."
- Ø Jesus doesn't need John's testimony, or any man's, but he confirms it completely so that they will believe the rest of his message – repent – and be saved.
- Ø Sometimes we just need to hear the message from one of "our own."
- Ø "For your sake John was sent. For your sake I call attention to John's witness that you might be saved." How incredibly compassionate our God is, using every avenue to reach us.
- Ø John was the lamp shining forth the light of Christ. Like him, we need to burn brightly in this dark world.
- Ø They rejoiced "for a while" with John. Passing fad. It's a shame the human condition that needs constant "new and improved".
- Ø But Jesus has witnesses that are more substantial or greater than John (even though John was considered by Jesus to be one of the greatest man who ever lived up to this time Luke 7:28), the first of which is...

**John 5 {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.**

v.36: The 3<sup>rd</sup> witness is his works or signs or miracles.

- Ø Even Nicodemus recognized that these signs Christ did were impossible unless God was with him.
- Ø The evidence was substantiated: John 7:31, John 11:47, John 20:30; John 21:25.
- Ø I don't think we realize the magnitude of Jesus' miraculous works: many have said that he practically eradicated sickness and disease in the Judea-Samaria-Galilee regions.
- Ø Signs have always been used to validate the message from God.
- Ø These incredibly powerful, miraculous events proved that Jesus was sent by the Father.
- Ø Yet...the unbelieving mind has to come up with another explanation: "It is by Beelzebub that he casts out demons." Powers of the Dark side. And in fact, we are warned in Scripture that many will be fooled by false signs. (Matt 24:24; Mark 13:22)

**John 5 {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, {38} and you do not have his word abiding in you, for you do not believe the one whom he has sent.**

v.37,38: But wait there's more...the 4<sup>th</sup> witness is the Father Himself. He testifies that Jesus is who he says (Messiah, the Son of God) and that the things he is doing are not wrong.

- Ø There are 2 instances where the gospels record the Father's verbal testimony about the Son. (?) (Matt 3:17, Matt 17:5)
- Ø "God the Father testifies about me all the time to many, but guess what, you have not heard His voice or seen manifestation of His testimony because you do not have His word abiding in you. This is evident because you do not believe the one sent by Him."
- Ø "You don't hear or see him because you are not His."
- Ø They were not regenerate (yet, maybe). Apart from God the Holy Spirit's illumination or a transformed mind, people cannot believe. Ever ask why don't they believe?
- Ø God speaks... Still small voice. The inner voice. Conscience. The seed of eternity planted in a heart. The first step (one of) in salvation is God opening our eyes to Him.
- Ø "We know... Unless you are born again, you cannot know..." (John 3)
- Ø {37} And the Father who sent me has testified about me himself. You have never heard his voice or seen him face to face, {38} and you do not have his message in your hearts, (why?) because you do not believe me—the one he sent to you.

**John 5 {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.**

v. 39, 40: We come to Jesus' 5<sup>th</sup> and final witness (they are not in order of importance), the Faithful Writings of Scripture.

- Ø You even search the Scriptures (indicative sense)... and they testify about me. He hits another pride hot button – do you get the idea that God opposes the proud?
- Ø These guys were the Bible student of all Bible students! They read, studied, memorized, wrote it on their doorframes, tied it to their heads and hands. They knew Scripture and they new it talked about eternal life – almost like Ponce de Leon's search for the Fountain of Youth.
- Ø "Knowing" Scripture is not the same as "drinking it in," "embracing it with our heart," "reveling in God's words," or "putting them into action." (Psa 1:1-2 et al; James 1:22; Rev 1:3; Prov 1:8)
- Ø It has been said that if you look properly, you can see Jesus on every page of the OT. Nevertheless: John 1:45; Luke 24:27; Rev 19:10b! I've heard said there are over 300 prophecies in the OT concerning Jesus – as we discussed in John 1 lesson.
- Ø Apart from God the Holy Spirit's illumination or a transformed mind, Scriptures cannot be properly understood. (1 Cor 2:9-15)
- Ø This is why I always stress the "big picture" view when reading a document such as Scripture before we dive into the details. The Holy Spirit has revealed to us the "purpose" of the OT and the Law. And that is? Gal 3:15-29; Rom 3:19-20; Rom 5:20. The Law came to reveal man's sinfulness and utter inability to save himself – drove us to a Savior! What is the purpose of the Bible? To let us know that God made us and loves us (and even likes us) and wants a great relationship with us. As Vince says, "Every verse could just say, 'God is all you need.'"
- Ø "Whatever light they find they doubt it; they love not light – just talk about it."
- Ø "I offer you eternal life, but you are unwilling to come to me that you may have it." Jesus offers the greatest gift ever, greater than riches, power, fame, beauty, anything you can imagine this world could offer (sounds like a song...), and yet many will not come to him. Why? Luke 16:27-31; 1 Cor 2:14; Matt 19:25-26; Tit 3:3-7. They don't believe him!
- Ø Jesus chooses who will be saved in concert with the Father. I'll bet some in that crowd that day were saved. (Does this help us know how we should evangelize? With passion!)

**John 5 {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? {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} For 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?"**

v.41-47: Jesus closing statement for his defense.

- Ø “I am not saying or doing these things to receive glory from men. Your approval or disapproval means nothing to me, because I know you, and the love of God is not in you. You have proven that because I came in the Father’s name and you have not welcomed me. Yet if one comes in his own name, you will welcome him because you seek the same honor yourselves. No wonder you can’t believe, you seek the praise of man and the things of this earth instead of the praise of your Father and the treasures of Heaven. (Already received rewards (Matt 6:2,5,16; 23:5; God and money (Matt 6:24); Well done good and faithful servant (Matt 25:21,22); Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness (Matt 6:33); Where your treasures are there your heart is also (Matt 6:20-21))
- Ø “Also, you need to be careful who you receive...” (Sounds like many of the “Mutual Admiration Societies” going on around us.) Then Jesus ends with the coup de grace:
- Ø “Listen, it’s not me who’s going to accuse you before the Father, no, the one you esteem most highly, Moses, he is the one who accuses you! The one on whom you set your hopes of heaven, Moses, wrote about me. If you really believed him, you would recognize and believe me. Those men of old, like Moses and the prophets, longed to see this day. Won’t you believe!

Do you sense the compassion and passion of Christ in this great discourse? Reminds me of Atticus’ closing statements in his trial scene in *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Jesus preached as one desiring “all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of truth.” (1 Tim 2:4)

Where does that leave you and me? We have the witness of Jesus, John the Baptist, the Bible, the Father, 2,000 years of testimony of the power of Jesus to deliver men and women from their bondage to sin, change their lives, science and archeology. Like we said, the evidence is compelling. There’s even a book to that effect, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, Josh McDowell. What will you decide?

References:

1. Guideposts, *Nelson’s Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, 1986
2. <http://godsvie.com/study.html>
3. Halley, Henry H., *Pocket Bible Handbook*, 1951
4. *The NIV Study Bible*, Zondervan Bible Publishers, 1985
5. MacArthur, John, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: John 1-11*, 2006
6. Stedman, Ray C., *The Credentials of Jesus*, 1983 (<http://www.raystedman.org/>)