

Why Should We Believe You?

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[0 : 0 0] We're working through the story of Jesus in the Gospel of John, and for the last while we have been listening to Jesus' conversation that he's having with the religious leaders here in John chapter 5.

Right now in the story, Jesus is in Jerusalem. He's just healed a man on the Sabbath day, and the religious leaders are going after him. They want him dead.

They're furious with him. They believe that he is a blasphemer because of the special relationship that he claims to have with God, his Father. Jesus has been saying some pretty amazing things.

He's been saying things like, just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it.

He's been saying things like, the Father has entrusted all judgment to the Son. He's been saying things like, a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear the voice of the Son and come out, and those who have done what is good will rise to live, and those who have done what is evil will rise to be condemned.

[1 : 1 3] He's been saying things like, very truly, I tell you, whoever hears my words and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged.

Astonishing claims that Jesus has been making in this conversation. Well, this morning we're going to finish off this conversation between Jesus and the religious leaders in John chapter 5, and in these verses that we're about to read, John continues to tell us only what Jesus said that day.

But you can hear in the words and the tone and the flow of what Jesus said that this is a back-and-forth conversation, likely, and probably a heated conversation.

There's one big question that seems to lie beneath the surface of what Jesus is about to say, and if the religious leaders are not asking it out loud, we can be sure that they are at least thinking it in their hearts.

And the question is this, Why should we believe you, Jesus? Why should we believe what you say? You all hear the things that he's saying.

[2 : 3 0] These are claims like no one has ever made. Why should we believe you? Let's read it in John chapter 5, verse 31. This is Jesus' response.

He says, If I testify about myself, my testimony is not true. There is another who testifies in my favor, and I know that his testimony about me is true.

You have sent to John, and he has testified to the truth. Not that I accept human testimony, but I mention it that you may be saved.

John was a lamp that burned and gave light, and you chose for a time to enjoy his light. I have testimony weightier than that of John.

For the works that the Father has given me to finish, the very works that I am doing, testify that the Father has sent me.

[3 : 35] And the Father who sent me has himself testified concerning me. You have never heard his voice, nor seen his form, nor does his word dwell in you, for you do not believe the one he sent.

You study the scriptures diligently, because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very scriptures that testify about me.

Yet you refuse to come to me, to have life. I do not accept glory from human beings, but I know you.

I know that you do not have the love of God in your hearts. I have come in my Father's name, and you do not accept me.

But if someone else comes in his own name, you will accept him. How can you believe, since you accept glory from one another, but do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?

[4 : 51] But do not think I will accuse you before the Father. Your accuser is Moses, on whom your hopes are set. If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me.

But since you do not believe what he wrote, how are you going to believe what I say? This was Jesus' answer, and there's a lot in that answer.

Why should we believe you? The first major thing that Jesus says, the first answer that he gives to their question, is that there is one who bears witness.

that what he's saying is true. There is one who gives his testimony to confirm that Jesus speaks the truth. Woven through this whole section is the language of testimony, and testifying.

Let's listen to Jesus' words there in verse 31. He says, if I testify about myself, my testimony is not true. Or some translations say, my testimony is not valid.

[6 : 04] What does Jesus mean by that? Well, people who have studied this much more than I have, and probably understand it better than I do, have pointed to a couple of things.

First, Jesus has already made it clear that he does nothing by himself. Back in verse 19 and in verse 30, he said that he only does what he sees his father doing.

He only judges in accordance with what he hears from his father. And so we've heard this truth, and we'll hear it again in the gospel. Jesus does not act independently of his father.

As we'll see later in the gospel, he does not speak independently of him either. He says only what the father has told him to say. He's not here to accomplish his own agenda.

He tells us that he is here to accomplish the will of his father. If I testify about myself, my testimony is not true or valid.

[7 : 08] And so perhaps, just as Jesus does not seek to please himself, neither does he seek to testify about himself. Or we might say, he doesn't seek to be his own witness, to confirm his own words.

Jesus, you'll know this from the scriptures, the story that you've heard already, that he always had a perfect answer to every challenging question that was asked of him.

But I think what Jesus is saying is that his goal was never to just vindicate himself. in the eyes of others or to prove beyond the shadow of a doubt to everyone that every word he said was true or to make others believe what he was saying.

His goal was not to win the argument, to be his own witness. His goal was to say just what the father told him to say.

The second thing that people point to here seems to have to do with the Jewish law. According to the Jewish law, one witness was not enough to convict someone of a crime.

- [8 : 21] And so, in the same way, we're not expected to believe any guy who comes along and claims things like Jesus has claimed just because he claims them.
- of course, God would give us more. He would give us another witness, other testimonies that bear witness to confirm what Jesus is saying.
- And Jesus tells us this in verse 32. There is another, says Jesus, who testifies about me or in my favor. And I know that his testimony about me is true.
- So, who is this other who testifies about Jesus? Well, if we keep reading, it would seem like Jesus might mean John the baptizer.
- The next verse says, you have sent to John and he has testified to the truth. If you remember how this gospel started, right at the beginning, John the gospel writer told us that John the baptizer came to bear witness to the light that was coming into the world.
- [9 : 31] And so, it's reasonable, it seems reasonable to think that Jesus is talking about John the baptizer, this other witness, this other person who bears witness or testifies to Jesus.
- But, that being said, most scholars, commentators, think that Jesus is referring not to John the baptizer but to God himself, his father, as the one who bears witness or testifies about him.
- And there's some good reasons to go with that as well. In verse 34, Jesus says, I do not accept human testimony. So, perhaps, Jesus meant the father all along but maybe the religious leaders thought he was referring to John the baptizer.
- And so, the line of thinking goes that maybe Jesus is acknowledging, yes, John has testified to the truth. You've heard it from him when you sent the delegation out to him.
- But I don't receive testimony from man. That's not the other testimony I'm talking about. I affirm John so that you might listen to him and believe what he's saying and be saved.
- [10 : 51] he goes on to talk about John in verse 35. He says, John was a lamp that burned and gave light and you chose for a time to enjoy his light.
- But notice Jesus' careful choice of words. You chose for a time. you were excited.
- You were happy that a prophet of God seemed to be here after all these years. But eventually your excitement with John wore off. Maybe it was when John began calling some of you a brood of vipers and calling you to repent.
- Maybe it was when he started pointing people towards me. No. I have testimony weightier than that of John says Jesus.
- I have something much greater that confirms the words that I say. A greater reason why you should believe me. A testimony that bears witness to the truth of my words.
- [11 : 57] What is it? Who gives this greater testimony? I think Jesus is referring to God the Father. And the Father's testimony comes in the form of giving the Son works to do.
- I have testimony weightier than that of John for the works that the Father has given me to finish. The very works that I am doing testify that the Father has sent me.
- When Jesus speaks of works he probably means more than just miracles. but for sure when he says works I think he's including the miracles that he's been performing.
- You might remember earlier in this discussion he told the religious leaders back in verse 20 you will see greater works than these so that you will be amazed.
- They'd already seen or at least heard of how he'd healed the man at the pool of Siloam the guy who couldn't walk for 38 years. An amazing miracle. Jesus says you're going to see greater works than these.
- [13 : 12] So when he says works I think he's talking about miraculous things but even more than that there's a bit of a testimony in the works themselves.

That Jesus does miracles points to the reality that the Father has sent him. Nicodemus got it right back in chapter 3 when he went out on a limb and said this no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him.

Nicodemus has been connecting the dots in the right way. He sees this couldn't happen unless God were with you. In other words the very things that Jesus is doing turning water into wine at the wedding flipping the tables in the temple courts and chasing out the sellers and the money changers the other signs that he performed that weren't written down by John the healing of the royal official's son from a distance all the things that the other gospel writers have told us that Jesus has been doing up until this point in the story casting out demons preaching the good news of the kingdom of God all of these the very works that I'm doing says Jesus testify these very things I'm doing are themselves a testimony from the father that he has sent me they're his signature of authenticity upon my words that's how you can know that what I'm saying is true notice the little word

Jesus uses there for the works that the father has given me to finish there are even more to come that I have not yet finished that you will see in verse 37 he says the father who sent me he himself has testified concerning me he is my witness so that's the first answer that Jesus gives why should we believe you the answer because God my father has been testifying that what I say is true through the works that he has given me to do possibly when he spoke from heaven with an audible voice and as we'll see in a moment he has also testified through the prophets that penned the scriptures long ago but at this point what Jesus goes on to say takes a bit of a turn up until now this discussion has kind of been focused on Jesus but now there's a bit of a shift and Jesus turns the focus of the conversation onto them the religious leaders he says you have never heard his voice nor seen his form nor does his word dwell in you for you do not believe the one he sent we've seen this many times throughout the gospel of John already

Jesus has this amazing knowledge of people he knows what they're thinking he knows what they're feeling he knows what's going on in their hearts he knows details about their lives that he has not been present in the flesh to see you'll remember that with Nathanael when Nathanael came to follow him Jesus told him something about Nathanael and Nathanael said you are the son of God he knew what was in the hearts and minds of the people the last time he was in Jerusalem when he didn't entrust himself to anyone he knew what was going on in Nicodemus his thoughts he knew about the five husbands that the woman at the well had and here we see again Jesus knows what's going on in the hearts of the religious leaders who are challenging him and he declares it out loud to them he says you have never heard his voice nor seen his form nor does his word dwell in you for you do not believe the one he sent

[17 : 56] Jesus goes on to tell them more about what he knows about them in verse 40 he says you refuse to come to me to have life that word refuse in the original a more literal translation you are unwilling you do not want to come to me so that you may have life the evidence the testimony the witness to the truth of my words is clear it's clear in my works it's clear in the scriptures it's not for lack of evidence that you don't come to me it's because you do not want to you do not will to come to me in your heart you do not believe the one he has sent not because there's no clear evidence not because there's not a witness not because there's nothing to confirm the truth there's lots of that when

Jesus says you do not believe the one he sent I think he means you choose not to believe you do not want to believe you are not willing to believe despite the clear evidence and testimony of the father in my works and in the scriptures and so Jesus goes on to state what's really true about them as only Jesus can do he says you have never heard his voice nor seen his form nor does his word dwell in you you do not believe he die the evidence that you have truly heard God's voice his testimony about his son is that you believe the one he sent the evidence that the word of God lives in you dwells in you will be that you believe you take seriously and as true the words of

Jesus the one he has sent. Jesus goes on to say even more that he knows about them in verse 41. He says, I do not accept glory from human beings, but I know you.

I know that you do not have the love of God in your hearts. What would that feel like to hear Jesus say that to you?

Can you imagine that? God, I know you. I know that you do not have the love of God in your hearts. We're not going to go as closely with the rest of it here, but he goes on to say that he knows what's at the root of their stubborn unbelief.

[20 : 53] He tells them that they're caught up in seeking glory and honor and praise from other people. They don't have a love of the Father in their hearts.

They have a love of the attention of other people. Jesus says, essentially, in this next section, you truly care more about what they think of you than what God thinks of you.

That's why you choose not to believe. It's not because the scriptures don't clearly point to me. It's not because the many signs and miracles I've done have gone unnoticed.

It's not because my words are unpersuasive and unconvincing. It's not mainly about reason. It's about love. The religious leaders are having a love affair.

They love the attention and praise of one another and of the people for their showy religiosity. They love it so much that they aren't willing to give that up to this carpenter from Nazareth who works wonders such as they have never seen before.

[22 : 07] Do you remember those words that we saw earlier in John 3? Verse 19. This is the verdict.

Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil.

Why should we believe you? Jesus answers the question, God the Father has testified about me. How?

He's done so in the works that he's given me to do, some of which are amazing. He did so in an audible voice which thundered from the heavens at my baptism.

This is my Son whom I love. With Him I am well pleased. And the third big way that the Father has testified about Jesus is through the scriptures, through the words that God has spoken all through human history, which were penned by the prophets and preserved by God through the ages.

[23 : 14] In verse 39, Jesus says, You study the scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life.

These are the very scriptures scriptures that testify about me. Just a little bit down in verse 46, Jesus brings up Moses.

The religious leaders were very big on Moses. He's the one who, the law, the first five books of the Old Testament came through. Jesus says, If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me.

He prophesied about me. Do you hear what Jesus is saying? There's a clear testimony about me in the scriptures.

God spoke it long ago through the prophets. Yet even though you've made a thorough effort to study or search the scriptures in order to find the way to God, to find eternal life, you've missed it.

[24 : 29] In fulfillment of the scriptures, I am here, right now, in front of you. I'm telling you that I am he. As we heard last Sunday, because he is, the son of God is, the son of man.

I performed a miracle this morning at the pool of Siloam, which gives further confirmation. Yet you do not want to come to me to have life, to receive the gift I offer.

Again, it's not that they made a careful and humble study, but just innocently didn't see it. I think if we're listening carefully to what Jesus is saying, he knows about their hearts, it's that they do not want to see it.

Probably most of you, by now, have had that kind of a conversation with someone. Whether it's about a controversial topic in the Bible, or about politics, somehow you find yourself reading the same articles, the same news pieces, the same Bible passages as someone else, and yet you come to completely different conclusions about them than they do.

And there comes that point in those conversations, oftentimes, where you can sense that no matter what you say, no matter what evidence, or passage, or articles, or links you put in front of them, you know that it simply won't change their mind.

[26 : 02] They are deeply committed to their view. They do not want to change their view. And even as you try to persuade them, you notice that instead of what you're saying, drawing them closer to what you believe, to your point of view, it's like it's only serving to further entrench them in their view.

This is a picture, I think, of how it sometimes goes as we seek to share the message of Christ with people in our world.

Not always, but sometimes. We throw them the gospel rope, a lifeline, to pull them to safety, to salvation. And we pull on it, trying to persuade them and draw them across the line to safety, to salvation, and yet in their hands and in their minds as they look at that rope, they don't see it as a lifeline.

They refuse to see it as a lifeline. They see it as a tug-of-war rope. And they dig in their heels even harder. The more you pull, the more they dig in.

Not always, but sometimes. It's kind of a picture, I think, of what's happening here with the religious leaders. though the evidence is clear enough, there is an unwillingness to acknowledge that Jesus is the one standing here right now that the scriptures are talking about.

[27 : 35] They were not willing, the religious leaders, to humble themselves before the people and admit that they had been wrong, that they had been wicked, that they had been proud and arrogant.

They didn't want to admit that they had used traditions to take advantage of the needy and the poor. They loved what their sinful and wicked ways had got for them.

They loved the wealth. They loved the applause and the respect and honor they got from people. Jesus gives them a very thorough answer to the question of why they should believe in Him.

God the Father has testified about me through my works, at my baptism, through the scriptures, Moses himself wrote about me.

But there's a bigger problem here, says Jesus. Verse 47, you do not believe what Moses wrote.

[28 : 41] Truly, the word of God does not live in you. Verse 38, you have never heard His voice.

Verse 37, you do not have the love of God in your hearts. you're not living for His approval because you are in love with the approval of other people.

And so in many ways, Jesus turns the question, why should we believe in you? He turns the question on its head and He challenges those who are asking it. The question you should be asking is not so much why should we believe in you?

That's obvious. Look at the works. Look at the miracles. read the scriptures. The question is why are we stubbornly choosing not to believe despite the clear testimony and witness that God has provided?

And Jesus knows the answer because you love the darkness. You love what is wicked, what is evil.

[30 : 02] You do not love the light as you should. God is worthy of your committed love, of the love of your whole heart.

It's as though Jesus is saying, I've been sent to make this relationship between you and Him right and good. but the reason you reject me and choose not to believe is because you are deeply entangled in a love affair.

One you are not willing to surrender and let go of. That's how the conversation ends here in John chapter 5.

There's no description given about their response to Him but we have to know that the religious leaders are infuriated and seething with hatred towards Jesus after hearing this.

It was this infuriation and hatred towards Jesus that fueled them as they went after Him with relentless tenacity until they had finally secured His death.

[31 : 13] So what do we take from all of this for ourselves today? There's so many ways that Jesus' words here in John 5 could speak to us, could speak to our hearts, could speak to our lives.

Of course at the forefront we hear this amazing offer of eternal life from Jesus. We hear the clear claims that He is the Son of God who has come on behalf of His Father with God's own words for people.

And we hear the call again and again and again to believe Him. And so let me ask you this morning, do you believe what Jesus is saying?

Do you believe that God the Father has sent Him into the world to deliver these very words to you? Perhaps you're sincerely wondering, well how can I know that what Jesus says is true?

Jesus' answer, look at what I did. Look at the miracles. Look at the works. Look at the prophecies made long ago in the scriptures.

[32 : 37] Have you looked at those things? Have you seen them? If not, I encourage you, look at them again, read them, study them, pray, and ask God to make it clear to you.

This matters a lot because as we've heard from Jesus, eternal life and eternal punishment hangs in the balance. perhaps you're here this morning and you've heard lots of the story of Jesus, but you know in your heart that there's this deeply rooted skepticism and that you do not really believe it.

Not all of it. Maybe some of the good parts that Jesus says, but not all of it. If that's you this morning, Jesus has a word of challenge for you.

Is it that you don't believe it? Or is it that you don't want to believe it? Is it that you don't like the implications of all that Jesus said being true?

Perhaps like the religious leaders, you love other things in this life or this world that you know Jesus has a problem with. Jesus is graciously offering to you this morning an opportunity to change your mind, to change your heart, to repent, to believe, and to find his forgiveness and receive the life that he's been talking about.

[34 : 18] We all know that the darkness has a draw to it. There's something appealing about it. But deep inside we all know that the light of our creator is far better.

So I invite you to come to Jesus if you have not, to give your life to him fully. Even if it scares you to consider the cost of that.

Listen to Jesus. He's got lots of reasons for why it's absolutely worth it. Sprinkled throughout his teachings, which we have in the Bible. Perhaps you're here this morning and you do believe with all your heart that every word that Jesus said is true.

So what should you do with all this? Well, first I hope you see the beauty and glory of Jesus in this passage. church. He is God and was with God at the very beginning.

He is the very son of God and yet he will only say what his father has told him to say. He will not go off the script on his own to vindicate himself, to win the argument so that he can gloat over his opponents and look awesome in the eyes of his disciples and followers.

[35 : 41] again we see that beautiful glory of Christ, meekness and majesty, manhood and deity, grace and truth in perfect harmony.

Nobody in Jesus' day had the courage to say, to speak the things that he spoke to these conniving and ruthless religious leaders.

I love how we see just how fearless Jesus is. He speaks for God as he exposes the sins of their hearts and yet he is gracious.

He knows that some may listen and repent but he also knows that most will not. Jesus has not come to be popular.

He's not come to be loved by people. He's come out of his own love for people and for his father who sent him.

[36 : 51] And so he does even the difficult work that the father has given him to do. He says even the difficult words that the father has given him to say like in this conversation.

I hope we see the glory of Jesus here. Even though he did not come to seek praise and glory and honor for himself.

Oh he is so worthy of it from us. Finally I don't know about you but I find in these words an anchor and a firm foundation as I think about sharing the good news of Jesus with other people.

I find comfort and strength in knowing that Jesus knows exactly what it's like to look into the eyes of a person who he knows does not believe in him.

Not just does not believe but into the eyes of a person who is choosing not to believe in him. Despite having witnessed miracles he knows what it's like to look into the eyes of people who are choosing not to believe in him and yet plead with them to grab a hold of the lifeline.

[38 : 08] To come to him and to receive what they do not deserve. Grace. Mercy. Eternal life.

Forgiveness. I couldn't help but think if I was Jesus and I knew that they were as hard hearted as they were how tempting it would be to just say well why bother reasoning with them?

Why bother telling them the truth? It's only going to make them mad and stir up a hornet's nest against me. Why bother? But if Jesus knew that some would reject his words and yet he still graciously and faithfully spoke the truth and called them to repent and believe how much more should we be willing to do the same?

No matter what we know about how they might respond or what we think we know about how they will respond. When it comes to sharing the good news of Jesus we need to be like him.

We need to love him and the person that we are sharing with more than we love the praise of that person. Some will be offended by the truth no matter how graciously we share it but some will hear and believe and receive Christ's gift of life.

[39 : 35] And for that it would be worth it a hundred times over. Let's pray. Lord Jesus thank you for your word.

We pray and ask that you would cause it to take root deep in our hearts. Bring your conviction over us in every area of our life that we need it.

Give us your comfort too. Give us your encouragement. Fill our hearts with faith. And help us to declare graciously, lovingly, faithfully the good news of who you are and hold built that lifeline.

We ask this in your name. Amen. Amen.