

Can I Get A Witness?

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Date: 21 May 2023

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[0 : 00] Please open up your Bibles to John chapter 5 this morning. We've been working our way through John's Gospel. We've made our way to the end of chapter 5.

And this morning we'll read from verse 30 through the end of the chapter, verse 47. So if you would, Bibles open, follow along with me as I read. Jesus says, 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. If I alone bear witness about myself, my testimony is not true.

There is another who bears witness about me, and I know that the testimony that he bears about me is true. You sent to John, and he has borne witness to the truth. Not that the testimony that I receive is from man, but I say these things so that you may be saved.

He was a burning and shining lamp, and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light. 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.

[1 : 15] And the Father who sent me has himself borne witness about me. His voice you have never heard, his form you have never seen, and you do not have his word abiding in you, for you do not believe the one whom he has sent.

You search the scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life, and it is they that bear witness about me. Yet you refuse to come to me, that you may have life.

I do not receive glory from people, but I know that you do not have the love of God within you. 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.

How can you believe when you receive glory from one another, and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God? 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.

For if you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote of me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words?

[2 : 19] This is the word of God. Let's pray once more. Lord, we ask again that you would speak, O Lord, as we open up your word, and as we seek you in it, we pray that you would speak to our hearts.

We ask in Christ's name. Amen. We ended last week with a quote from C.S. Lewis, and we're going to begin this week with another quote from C.S. Lewis.

This one is from one of his collections of essays called *God and the Dock*. Mr. Lewis is giving us an image of a courtroom scene. You can have that image in your mind.

A courtroom scene. With God himself seated in the place where the accused party sits, and the man in the seat of the judge. Here's what he says.

He says, The ancient man approached God, or even the gods, as the accused person approaches his judge. For the modern man, the roles are quite reversed.

[3 : 18] He is the judge. God is in the dock. He is quite a kindly judge. If God should have a reasonable defense for being the God who permits war, poverty, and disease, he's ready to listen to it.

The trial may even end in God's acquittal. But the important thing is that man is on the bench, and God is in the dock. It is an absurd thought, isn't it?

That the judge of all the universe, the creator of all things, would ever have to give a defense of himself before man, before his creation.

But that is exactly the scenario that we find ourselves in here in John chapter 5. Jesus Christ is a man accused. He has just run in with the Pharisees.

He's been accused of breaking the Sabbath. But now, an even bigger offense, a greater offense, he's being accused of blasphemy, of making himself equal with God. You might remember last week, his defense, he said, The Father is working until now, and I am working.

[4 : 25] He's claimed total equality with God the Father in all of his actions. So much so that he says in verse 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. Jesus is claiming that every one of his thoughts, every one of his actions, every one of his steps that he takes, is in sync, is united.

It comes from the Father. He can do nothing on his own. Now this, we have to understand, is an incredibly bold claim. But there's an issue here.

Jesus himself acknowledges it. Verse 31, look there. He says, If I alone bear witness about myself, then my testimony is not true. In other words, if you make a claim like this, if you make a claim, something this big, this grand, you had better be ready to back it up.

And that's exactly what we see Jesus do here in John chapter 5. He does just that by providing witnesses. And here's what I want us to see this morning from this passage.

[5 : 36] That God, in his abundant mercy towards blind sinners like us, has provided an overwhelming flood of evidence that Jesus is the Messiah.

He's provided witness after witness after witness after witness, confirming the identity and the truth and the worth of Christ. And this is such a wonderful grace of God for sinners like us, because if you're like me, we so often, if we're honest, we so often waver in our belief.

We so often waver. We ebb and flow in our confidence. But evidence strengthens confidence. And we ought to rejoice, because passages like this, Christians, show us that our faith is not blind.

Our belief, what we profess to believe as Christians, it's not unsupported. John, we've seen over and over again, he's written these things that we may believe that Jesus is the Christ, and that by believing, we might have life in his name.

Our faith is strengthened. It's bolstered. It's supported by many witnesses to Christ. Our witness, as we go and share the gospel, is strengthened.

[6 : 53] It's encouraged. It's supported by many witnesses to Christ. So Jesus here, he calls up to the stand four witnesses to back up his claim. We see four witnesses here to the identity of Christ.

If you're a note taker, I encourage you to take notes. It helps you follow along. These are our outlines here, four witnesses to the identity of Christ. Witness number one is John the Baptist.

John the Baptist. Look there to verse 33. He says, You sent to John, and he has borne witness to the truth. Not that the testimony that I received is from man, but I say these things so that you may be saved.

He was a burning and shining lamp, and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light. See, John the Baptist, we saw from chapter one, he was a witness.

He was a forerunner. He came preparing the way for the Messiah, proclaiming the glory of Christ. Do you remember how chapter one described him? You might even just flip back there just for a moment.

[7 : 57] Chapter one, verse six, it tells us, there was a man sent from God whose name was John. He came as a witness, bearing witness about the light that all might believe through him.

He was not the light, but he came to bear witness about the light. This was the mission and purpose of John. He was sent by God to bear witness to Christ. Verse 15, chapter one.

It says, John bore witness about him and cried out, this is he of whom I said, he who comes after me ranks before me because he was before me. Again, in verse 32, it says, and John bore witness. I saw the spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. I myself did not know him, but he who sent me, that is God, he who sent me to baptize with water, said to me, he on whom you see the spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptized us with the Holy Spirit, and I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God.

See, every time you see John the Baptist, this is what he's doing, that he is bearing witness. He's testifying, he's proclaiming, he's witnessing to the identity of Christ.

[9 : 11] He's calling us to repent and to prepare, to prepare ourselves. The Messiah is coming. The kingdom of heaven is near. Prepare yourselves and get ready. He's witnessing to the coming Christ.

And it says, people were generally willing to rejoice for a while in his light. Now, of course, we know some grumbled, some questioned, many objected to his teaching, but many were coming to him to be baptized.

Many were coming and hearing his message. But despite that temporary revival and attention that came with the ministry of John, these Pharisees were not able to see clearly the message of his ministry.

Do you remember what his message was? Don't look at me. Don't look at me. Look at Christ. Behold the Lamb of God. Behold the Lamb of God who comes to take away the sin of the world. He must increase. I must decrease. Now, you might remember from our time discussing John the Baptist, we mentioned that part of John the Apostle's purpose in writing this gospel, part of his purpose in including these accounts of John the Baptist in this story of Jesus is to root these claims about Christ in human history.

[10:33] So he says there was a man. He's a real man. His name was John. He was sent for this purpose. Here's what he said. Here's how he was received. The things that we're reading about here in this gospel, they took place in human history.

We need to remember these are not fairy tales. They're not legends. They are time stamped. Jesus lived and he breathed just like we do. He ate and he drank just like we do.

He walked on the earth and lived in human history. And John the Baptist is just one of many human witnesses to the glory of Christ.

You might think through the Old Testament. Every single one of the Old Testament prophets from Moses to Isaiah to Jeremiah, they all bore witness to the coming Messiah.

They all looked ahead and bore witness to the Messiah who was to come. They bore witness to Christ. And now John, the last of the Old Testament prophets, he sort of serves as the hinge between the Old and the New Testaments.

[11:37] He lays eyes on Christ and says, this is him. This is the one that we've been waiting for. But that human witness to the person of Christ, it didn't stop with John, did it?

Continued on through the disciples of Jesus. As they laid eyes on him, they saw who he was. They bore witness to his glory. And that witness carried on to the witness of the church.

From Jerusalem to Judea to Samaria, all the way down to us here. In all and all, in the low country, men and women of all ages, from all backgrounds, in all different countries, speaking different languages, the church is incredibly diverse, but we're united in one thing.

What is it? Our witness to the glory of Christ. You know, if you should ever grow weary in your faith, one thing I'd encourage you to do is to consider the human historical witness to Christ.

Consider the powerful witness of the church to Christ throughout the ages. I'd encourage you, read up on your church history. Read through the gospel, through the book of Acts.

[12:56] The gospel of Luke, into the book of Acts. Read up on how the apostles lived and died, professing that Jesus is the Christ. Read up on the ways the church fathers carefully defended the faith from heresy.

Read up on the ways the reformers and the Puritans just wrote and gushed about the glory of Christ. Read up on missionaries who are going to the ends of the earth, giving up everything they have, selling all that they have, giving everything, risking it all to profess and proclaim and bear witness that Jesus Christ is Lord.

You know, I've often found that when my faith is weak, that those embers of faith are fanned into flame by reading the witness of other believers.

Witness number one is John the Baptist and with him the historical witness of the church, but he says, 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.

Witness number two, the works of Christ. The works of Christ. One witness is what others say about Christ, but he says another, a greater witness is what Christ himself has done.

[14:17] It is one thing for someone to say that you are the strongest man in the world. It is another thing for you to actually pick up something above your head and lift it and demonstrate that strength. So consider what Jesus has done to this point in the Gospel of John.

We're only five chapters in, but he's already turned the water into wine. He has cleared the temple. He's prophesied his death and his resurrection. He's seen into the needy hearts of Nicodemus and

the woman from Samaria.

He's healed the sick boy from 20 miles away. He's healed the invalid man with just the words of his mouth. He is demonstrating the glory of his identity.

Jesus says his activity proves his identity. What he does shows who he is that we might believe.

Now this is what Jesus says in John 14, verse 11.

He says, Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves. See, Jesus didn't only declare his identity, he proved it.

[15 : 24] He demonstrated it by his works. He displayed his divinity for us to see and to witness by healing the sick, by casting out demons, by multiplying bread and fish, by calming the waves and the sea.

But of course, we know that his greatest work was yet to come. We know the end of the story, don't we? We have the advantage of having read the whole book.

The greatest work of Christ that proves without a doubt that he is God is his resurrection from the grave. His resurrection from the grave.

I wonder if we realize the significance of this work. If Jesus rose from the grave just as he prophesied, just as the church bears witness to, then who can he be but God in the flesh?

And if he didn't rise from the grave, then nothing else that he said or did matters at all. The resurrection of Christ is the defining work of Jesus.

[16 : 32] If you take this away, Christianity just crumbles to the ground. It's worthless, meaningless morality or inspiration, but it can't save you. All that Christ said and did is worthless apart from the resurrection from the dead.

There's no deliverance from death without the defeat of death. There's no offer of eternal life without the security of resurrection life.

There's no forgiveness of sins without proof that Christ's sacrifice has been accepted by God the Father. Everything hinges on this work of Christ.

This is what Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 15, one of my favorite passages. He says, If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.

But in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead.

[17 : 38] I wonder if the resurrection is a part of your gospel. When we talk about Jesus, let me encourage you, don't stop at the cross.

Don't stop at the cross. When we think about what Jesus has done, when we share Jesus' work with others, don't stop at the cross. The cross of Christ is massively good news.

It is good news to say to your neighbor, to your co-worker, to your friend, to your family member, Jesus died for you, but not if he stays in the grave.

Don't stop at the cross. Make your way to the empty tomb. This work is something that the world has to give an answer for. Even his opponents, even those who killed him, they acknowledge that his body is not there.

But no one, and no other religious figure, and no other religious leader, no other individual, has ever risen from the grave, never to die again.

[18 : 44] Now, you can go visit the tomb of Muhammad. His body is still there. But you go visit the tomb of Christ. You can't find his body. He is risen. The tomb is empty.

And this work, above all others, bears witness that he is God. But there's a third witness here.

Witness number three. God the Father.

God the Father. If you're going to call anyone up to the stand to back up your claim, this is a good one. He says, God the Father. There in verse 32, he says, there's another who bears witness about me, and I know that the testimony that he bears about me is true.

And now we get to see who that other witness is. Look again to verse 36. He says, 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.

And the Father who sent me has himself bore witness about me. His voice you have never heard, his form you have never seen, and you do not have his word abiding in you, for you do not believe the one whom he has sent.

[19 : 57] He says, the Father himself, has borne witness about the Son. How? How does God the Father bear witness to God the Son?

It could be a reference to his baptism. We just saw already that God revealed to John the Baptist that whoever he saw the Spirit descend and remain upon at the baptism, someone like a dove, that that individual was the Christ, that individual was the Messiah, and John saw and bore witness that at the baptism of Christ, the Spirit, the Spirit, in fact, did descend on Christ.

Luke chapter 3 tells us when Jesus had also been baptized and was praying, the heavens were opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove, and a voice came from heaven.

You are my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased. It could be a reference to his baptism. There are two other, and only two other times, that God the Father audibly speaks in the Gospels, once at the Transfiguration, Mark chapter 9, and the other just before his crucifixion, we'll see in John chapter 12.

But neither of these have happened yet at this point in Jesus' ministry. And so we're left asking, how does the Father bear witness to the Son? Well, he does so in the works of creation and redemption.

[21 : 21] The works of creation and redemption. Creation itself is a witness to the identity and glory of Christ.

Colossians 1.16 says, For by him, by Christ, all things were created in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities, all things were created through him and for him.

Creation, which we are all a part of, we are all creation, and we live in creation, we experience creation every single day, all of it bears witness to Christ.

Paul says, All things were created through him. His fingerprints are all over all of it. In its complexity, in its beauty, in its unity, in its vastness, all of it was made through him.

But we also see, all things were created for him. The purpose of every created thing is the glory of Christ.

[22 : 29] If any part of creation is great, how much greater is the one who made it? If any part of creation is beautiful, how much more beautiful is the one who made it? If any part of creation is awe-inspiring and impressive, how much more awe-inspiring is the one who made it?

Dear church, if we had eyes to see it, we would walk outside and see Christ over every inch of creation. We would see Christ in every blade of grass, and one day, we will see it.

One day, the creation will speak more clearly than is ever spoken about the glory of Christ, and we will have eyes to see it more clearly than we ever have. All of it bears witness to him.

But not only the work of creation, we see the work of redemption bears witness to the identity of Christ. You know, the work of redemption didn't begin with the birth of Christ.

The work of redemption didn't begin with his incarnation. From the very beginning, God has been tilling soil and planting seed that in the fullness of time has blossomed forth in the work of Jesus.

[23 : 38] The whole story of redemption, from beginning to end, it bears witness to the person of Christ. Christ is the promised seed of the woman coming to crush the head of the serpent.

Christ is the new and better Adam who obeyed and never failed. Christ is the true deliverer from slavery to sin, not just the exodus from Egypt. Christ is the true and faithful better King of David, Son of David, who would reign forever.

Christ is the one who secures every promise of the new covenant. For God to put his own spirit in our hearts to replace our heart of flesh, a heart of stone with a heart of flesh, all of it bore witness to Christ.

Are we listening? Are we listening to the voice of God in creation? Are we listening to the voice of God in redemption? Apparently, despite all of this wealth of evidence, the Pharisees were not listening.

Jesus says in verse 37, He says, His voice you have never heard, His form you have never seen, and you do not have His word abiding in you, for you do not believe the one whom He has sent.

[24 : 57] You search the scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life, and it is they that bear witness about me. This is witness number four. It's the scriptures.

Witness number four is the scriptures. You search the scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life, and it is they that bear witness about me.

Yet you refuse to come to me, that you may have life. Church, the Pharisees were not biblically illiterate. They knew the word of God inside and out, backwards and forwards.

They outpaced modern Christians by a hundred miles in their devotion to the word. They knew and loved the word of God. They meditated on His word day and night.

They were zealous to obey the word of God. They would ace any quiz, any test. They would graduate from most seminaries with honors, specializing in the Old Testament. But what went wrong?

[26 : 01] They were not biblically illiterate, but for all their knowledge, they were biblically ignorant. They did not get the message.

And Jesus tells us fundamentally why. Do you see it here? He says, They were more concerned with man's approval than God's approval. Look there to verse 41.

Jesus says, I don't receive glory from people, but I know that you do not have the love of God within you. 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. How can you believe when you receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?

Do you see the problem? They are seeking the praise of man. They are more concerned with human praise, more concerned with worldly gain, more concerned with peer acceptance and peer influence, more concerned with people seeing and knowing them than they are with seeing and knowing God.

[27 : 11] And so they missed it. The whole message of the scriptures from beginning to end is Christ. The message of the law is Christ. He says, Moses, if you believed Moses, you would believe me because he wrote about me, but they missed it.

And if they missed that, then how will they hear and receive the word of Christ? There's a word for us here, I believe, church, by way of application for how we ought to approach the scriptures.

Do you read them like the Pharisees did, or do you read them as Christ intends, as a witness to him? I want to give us just a few applications here as we close and think about how we approach the scriptures.

When you sit down tomorrow morning and open up your Bibles and begin to read, do not read the Bible as an end in itself.

The end is Christ. Christ. The end of Bible reading is Christ. It's to know him. It's to see him. It's to behold him. It's to be made like him.

[28 : 23] It's to enjoy him. It's to delight in him. Not just to read it. And not just to check it off your list. And when we gather here and hear the word preached, the goal is not just to hear a sermon and go be on our way.

The goal is to meet with the living God. That he might be worshipped. That we might see him as he is so that we can honor him as he deserves. Don't come here just to hear a sermon.

Don't come here just so others might see you here at church and praise you and pat you on the back. Come here that you might hear the word of God and meet with him.

When you sit down tomorrow morning and open up your Bibles, do not read the word for the praise of man. If you want glory from other people, if you want praise from other man, if you want them to speak highly of you, you can have that and that is all you will have.

Do not seek praise from man. Seek not the glory that comes from man, but that comes from the only God. Not from others puffing you up, but from God himself building you up as you come to him in the word.

[29 : 35] Come to the word that you might be strengthened in your faith and molded more and more and more into the image of Christ. Come to the word for that. When you sit down tomorrow morning and open up your Bibles, do not read the word for your own self-justification.

Do you know what that word means? To make yourself right before God and to make yourself presentable to God. You can read the word every day.

Memorize it. Love it. Even seek to obey it. Be very zealous for the word of God and come away condemned by it if you think that simply by coming you are made right with God.

That's what the Pharisees believed, isn't it? This was the mistake that they made. But Jesus says, Do not think I will accuse you to the Father. There is one who accuses you. Moses.

Moses that you read every day. Moses that you memorize. Moses whose law you delight in. Moses whose law you're so zealous about. But you miss it. Because you try to be justified by Moses.

[30 : 48] When Moses spoke about me. There is one way to be justified before the Father. It's not by our doing. Not by our reading. Not by our working.

But by hearing and believing the word of Christ. To which all the scriptures bear witness. Church, the world is filled with evidence of the glory of Christ.

The church has borne him witness throughout the ages. His works bear him witness. The Father himself and the works of creation and redemption bear him witness. And the word of God from beginning to end.

It all bears witness to the person and the worth of this man. That Jesus is the Christ. That there is sufficient evidence in all the world. For all the world to believe that Jesus is who he says he is. If that was all it took. But evidence alone is not enough. Learn from the Pharisees. They saw the lamp.

[31 : 55] But not the light. They saw the works. But not the message. They claimed to honor the Father. But did not honor the Son. They knew the scriptures. But did not perceive their testimony.

Evidence alone is not enough. The Spirit must give life. He's pleased to do it through many witnesses.

But apart from him. Their testimony lies flat. It's the Spirit who gives life. The flesh is no help at all. And when we look at this mountain of evidence.

With fleshly eyes. We cannot see Christ. And we're condemned by our blindness. But. When the Spirit comes. He comes and opens up your eyes.

You begin to see the person and work of Christ. Everywhere. So church. We must pray.

[32 : 54] We must pray. We must pray for the Spirit to give us eyes to see. We must pray for the Spirit to empower our preaching. And our teaching here in this place.

We must pray for the Spirit to clarify. And to confirm. And to convict as we read God's word. We must pray for the Spirit to open up ears and eyes and hearts.

We must pray that the Spirit would bear fruit for the glory of God as we go and bear witness to Christ. Let's pray.

Lord, this is what we ask now. That your Spirit would take your word. And give us life by it.

That through your Spirit, Lord, you would open our eyes to see the many evidences. The many witnesses to the glory of Christ. All throughout creation. And especially here in your word.

[33 : 54] And God, as we go. We pray that we wouldn't just take these things and keep them to ourselves. But Lord, open our mouths. And through the faithful proclamation of the gospel. We pray that you would bring others from death to life.

We ask this in Christ's name. Amen. Amen.