

Lighthouse Bible Church

January 20th, 2013

John 5: 31 – 38

The Witnesses for Jesus *Scripture Reading Matthew 3: 1 - 12*

Stand – Read – Pray

Remember, most of chapter 5 is Jesus response to the unbelieving religious Jewish leaders about Him healing a man on the Sabbath day, which He wasn't supposed to do, according to their man made traditions.

So Jesus launches into this message by telling them that He not only has the right to heal on the Sabbath, He is the Lord of the Sabbath. He not only has the power to heal on the Sabbath, He can heal anyone, anytime He wants. He not only has the right to do what He does on the Sabbath, He does it because God, His Father, is doing it as well.

The Jews hated His response to their accusation that He violated the Sabbath and they hated it even more when He, as they said in John 5: 18 said, **made Himself equal with God**. And as we have seen, He is equal with God, equal in power, equal in authority, equal in ability to raise the dead, equal in judging the world and One who should receive equal honor.

So Jesus says to them **don't marvel at this**, I will tell you about the power and authority and judgment I have and how it will be most profoundly displayed by My raising many from spiritual death to spiritual life because they hear My words and believe in Him who sent Me.

Not only in My raising the spiritually dead to life but raising all who are in the graves to either the resurrection of life or the resurrection of condemnation. And that is where we want to pick it up this morning starting in Verse 31.

Jesus has just finished in Verse 30 by telling them that He does not do anything independent of God. He said **what I hear, I judge**. What I hear My Father say, I do and when I do it **My judgment is righteous**, it is perfect, because God is perfect. Jesus said I am not here to do My own will but the will of the Father who sent Him, and His will is perfect. It is like what He said back in Verse 19.

So as Jesus has been telling them all of this, He knows that in the back of their minds they are thinking ‘who does He think He is, making such claims and having no support for them, no cooperation of them, no one to support those outrageous claims. That is why Jesus says in Verse 31.

Verse 31: If I bear witness of Myself, My witness is not true.

Jesus isn't saying ‘what I am saying is not true’! He knows that their mindset is such that they would not believe Him by His own words alone. As a matter of fact, the MISHNA, which is all the Jewish laws put together says ‘a man is not worthy of belief if He speaks of Himself’.

So He draws them to a biblical principle held all throughout the Bible and that is, only on the witness of 2 or more can any truth be established, especially when talking about yourself.

Numbers 35: 30, Deuteronomy 17: 6 & 19: 15 all talk about the need to have 2 or 3 witnesses to cooperate whether someone was telling the truth, especially when it came to the possibility of them losing their life as a result.

In the N.T. Jesus uses the same principle when it comes to church discipline in **Matthew 18: 16** where He says **by the mouth of 2 or 3 witnesses, let every word be established**. Paul uses the very same phrase in **2nd Corinthians 13: 1** when talking to the church at Corinth.

In **1st Timothy 5: 19** Paul told Timothy **not to receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses.** The writer of Hebrews says in **Hebrews 10: 28** that **anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on the testimony of 2 or 3 witnesses.**

We still hold to that principle today. As a former Police Detective I had to have cooperative evidence..

So Jesus is about to give them several other witnesses to the fact that He is the Son of God, He has been given all authority to judge, He is able to give life to whom He wills and He will someday raise all people who are in the graves. He starts in Verses 32 – 35 with the first witness of John the Baptist.

Verse 32 There is another who bears witness of Me, and I know that the witness which He witnesses of Me is true.

Who was the **another one** that bore a **true** witness of Jesus' claims to being God and being able to judge all people and being able to raise all people to eternal life or eternal condemnation? The first witness Jesus calls on is John the Baptist in verses 33 - 35.

Verse 33 You have sent to John and he has borne witness of the truth.

You remember that John had borne witness of the truth of who Jesus was, way back in **John 1: 15** it says **John bore witness of Him and cried out saying 'this was He of whom I said He who comes after me is preferred before me, for He was before Me'**, talking about His eternal pre-existence. He says in **Verse 18** that Jesus **came from the Father.**

You remember that the Jews who are confronting Jesus in Chapter 5 are the same ones who came to John the Baptist in Chapter 1. Look at **1: 19, 24**. And John told them that Jesus was the **Lord**, the Messiah, promised by the prophet Isaiah. John tells them in **1: 29** that **Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world**. In **Verse 34** John calls Him **the Son of God**.

John tells them later in **John 3: 31 - 36** that Jesus **came from heaven**, that He was **sent from God**, that **what He sees and hears from the Father, He testifies to**, that **the Father gave all things into His hands** and only by **believing in Jesus can you have eternal life**.

You **have sent to John** Priests and Levites from the Pharisees and you heard Him because **he bore witness of the truth** about who I am. So it's not just Me, it is My words and the words of John the Baptist that bear witness of the truth about Me. And, by the way, John the Baptist was considered a prophet by everyone according to **Matthew 21: 26** and **Luke 20: 6**, so his testimony of who Jesus was would hold considerable weight.

The religious leaders went out to John and they listened to him and according to the end of Verse 35 **you were willing for a time, to rejoice in his light** until he began to speak about repentance and sin and judgment, then they didn't want anything to do with him. Not so much different than today ...

But the religious leaders didn't believe his message any more than they believed Jesus message. John ended up in prison and getting beheaded for sharing the truth of who Jesus was and they rejected his message just like they are rejecting Jesus' message. Then Jesus says this in Verse 34.

Verse 34: Yet I do not receive testimony from man, but I say these things that you may be saved.

Jesus is saying ‘I don’t need the testimony of any man to confirm who I am, I am telling you about John the Baptist and his testimony about Me for your sakes, not Mine.

I had him in the wilderness preaching the message of salvation and the promise of the coming Messiah and His arrival as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, not for Me, as if I needed someone to tell Me who I am, he was doing that so that you would know who I am and so **that you may be saved**. That was John’s purpose, that they who would hear the message of who Christ is and the way of salvation, that they would repent and be saved.

That is what we heard read earlier in **Matthew 3: 1 – 12** John said **repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand and bring forth fruit worthy of repentance**. He was **baptizing people who were confessing their sin**. He talked about **the wrath to come** and the **final judgment of the wheat and chaff**. Notice what Jesus says about John the Baptist in Verse 34.

Verse 35: He was the burning and shining lamp and you were willing for a time to rejoice in his light.

What a compliment by Jesus of John the Baptist and his ministry. He calls him a **burning and shining lamp**. He doesn’t call him a light, he calls him a lamp. Jesus is Light and the word used to identify Him is *phos*, it is where we get phosphorescent or phosphorus meaning light, and He calls Himself the Light of the world, in **John 8: 12** where He says **I am the light (*phos*) of the world, He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light (*phos*) of life**.

John said earlier in **John 1: 5 – 7** that Jesus was **the light (*phos*) of men** and that he came to **bear witness of the Light** and that He was **the true light (*phos*)** which gives light to every man.

Jesus identifies John the Baptist not as the light or *phos* but as the lamp and He uses the word *luchnos*, which means a little lamp or light. John the Baptist was a lamp that showed forth the light (*phos*) (end of verse 35) of Jesus.

You see, a lamp can not light itself, it needs an outside source to light it and in this case and in our case it is Jesus that makes us a **burning and shining lamp** to show forth His **light**. John the Baptist was that burning and shining light of Jesus to tell a lost and dying world about their sin and God's judgment and their need for repentance and His grace in forgiveness and His ultimate eternal judgment of those who do not listen and reject his message.

But as we see at the end of Verse 35 **they were willing** only **For a Time** to rejoice in that light because as **John 3: 19** said **men love darkness rather than light**.

O, they enjoyed it **for a time** in their insincerity and hypocrisy, but when he began to call them to repentance and challenge their hypocritical religious system and tell the Jews that they needed a savior just like the Gentiles, they began to turn away and alienated themselves from such foolish talk. Not so different than today...

So Jesus says, John the Baptist is my first witness, and you chose not to believe Him even though you thought he was a prophet of God, because you didn't like what he said. I'll give you another witness, look at Verse 36.

Verse 36: but I have a greater witness that John's; for the WORKS which the Father has given Me to finish, the very WORKS that I do, bear witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me.

Jesus says, not only do I have the testimony of John the Baptist but I have a greater testimony than him and it is the testimony of the WORKS that I do that show that I am the Son of God and that God has sent Me.

Remember what Nicodemus said back in **John 3: 2** **we know that you are a Teacher come from God for no one can do these signs**, these works, **that You do unless God is with him.** Nicodemus said that you must be from God because only God can do those things.

Jesus said to Philip in **John 14: 10 – 11** **do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority but the Father who dwells in Me does the WORKS. Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the WORKS themselves.**

He says, Philip you can believe that I and the Father are one, not only because of what I have told you but also because of the works that I do that show I and the Father are one.

Jesus says here in John 5 that the very works that I do verify and witness and testify that I am God in human form. Who else can:

Turn water into wine with just a spoken word
Heal a young man close to death, 20 miles away, with just a word
Heal a man of his 38 year infirmity so that he can instantly walk
Raise the dead and give life to them Only God can do that
Make someone who was deaf hear or blind from birth to see
Make a lepers contagious, disintegrating skin be made smooth and soft
Take 5 loaves and 2 fish and feed 5000 plus people so they are full – leftov
Walk on top of the stormy waters of the sea of Galilee as on dry ground
Can speak merely a word and the wind and sea obey His words. None other than Christ, none other than God, because Christ is God. You must believe that.

That is what John said in **John 20: 30 – 31** when he wrote **and truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have eternal life in His name.**

Jesus says, the very works that I do should be witness enough for you that I am truly the Son of God sent by My Father. Jesus will say later in **John 17: 4** **I have glorified You on the earth, I have finished the WORK which You have given Me to do.**

And that doesn't even take into account His work of salvation through the words that He spoke in changing the most hardened hearts to be born again. His work of preparing His disciples to carry on the work He began, the work of going to the cross, dying for the sins of the world, being buried and being raised from the grave.

Jesus said 'all of that is a **greater witness then that of John's** witness and testimony. Then Jesus says, I will give you one more even greater than that of John the Baptist and greater than that of My works and it is the testimony of My Father. Look at it in Verses 37 – 38.

Verses 37 – 38: **and The Father Himself, who sent Me, has testified of Me. You have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His form. But you do not have His word abiding in you, because whom He sent, Him you do not believe.**

Jesus says not only has John the Baptist testified of Me, not only do the works that I have done testified to who I am but there is even a greater witness to who I am and that is the testimony of God the Father.

He says **the Father who sent Me testifies of Me**, and He did on at least 2 occasions, didn't He, audibly, verbally. At His baptism in **Matthew 3: 17** when He came up out of the water it says **and suddenly a voice came from heaven saying this is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.** In **Matthew 17:5** at His transfiguration it says **suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying 'this is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him.**

But that is not what Jesus is talking primarily about here. He is talking about the witness of God as to who Christ is but it is not an audible witness from God Himself, but a witness and testimony about Christ that comes from the hearts of believers.

In **1st John 5: 9 – 10** it says this **if we receive the witness of men**, about who Jesus is, like that of John the Baptist did, **the witness of God is greater** as we have said **for this is the witness of God which He testified of His Son.** What is that witness that He testifies about Jesus? The next verse says **He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself; he who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed the testimony that God has given of His Son.**

You know what he is saying? God testifies about Christ and who He is, not through any audible means, but through our belief in Him as the Son of God, as God in human form, as it has been revealed to us through our belief in Him.

Jesus says to those unbelieving hostile Jewish religious leaders **you have neither heard His voice** because you are not willing to hear My voice, and you **have never seen His form** because you are not willing to see Me for who I am. And because of that He says in Verse 38.

Verse 38: But you do not have His word abiding in you, because whom He sent, Him you do not believe.

He says to these religious leaders ‘you have spent all that time study about God and you don’t know who He is because you don’t believe in Me’. The religious leaders were tenacious about learning about God and studying the scriptures and even not saying certain names for God and yet in all of that, they missed it. *Much like some people do today who think they know God but they really don’t because they don’t know His Son, Jesus. Because Jesus is the source of knowledge about God, because He is God, to reject Jesus is to reject God as well.*

Because they did not **believe** that Jesus is Gods Son, God in human form, the One to whom all judgment has been given, the one who raises people to spiritual life from deadness and the one who will raise all who are in the graves to everlasting life or everlasting condemnation, **His word does not abide in them.**

These religious leaders who studied the word of God inside and out missed who God was because they missed who His Son was. They studied the law tenaciously and yet they failed to recognize the Messiah, the Christ when He came. He came to His own and His own (what) received Him not.

One writer said this “The best Bible students in the world, people who meticulously and continuously read scripture, how could they reject Jesus, how could that happen? One thing is clear, they read scripture in the wrong way. They read it with a shut mind. They read it not to search for God but to find arguments to support their own positions. They did not really love God they loved their own ideas about Him. They did not humbly learn a theology from scripture, they used the scripture to defend a theology which they themselves had produced. They used the Bible to prove their beliefs rather than to test them...they worshipped the Bible’s words but not the God and Christ of the Bible”. *Wm Barclay on John page 197-198. Same for today.*

These religious people believed in God with all of their heart, they believed in the word of God and studied it continuously but they didn’t have **His word abiding** in them in order to be saved.

He says, ‘all that you should have known about Me is revealed in God’s Word and because of your religion, because of your hypocrisy, because of your unbelief, you do not know who I am and you **do not believe** who I am.

So if we go back to **John 5: 24 – 25**, these to whom Jesus is speaking did not hear His words and do not believe in Him who sent Him, because they don’t believe who Jesus is, and they do not have everlasting life and have not passed from death to life.

They not only don’t believe who in the God of the Bible, they not only don’t believe in the Christ of the Bible, they don’t even believe the Bible that they study so diligently, as we shall see next time. *What about you?*

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Introduction and Review:

Verse 31: In the mouth of 2 or 3 witnesses
Numbers 35: 30, Deuteronomy 17: 6, 19: 15
Matthew 18: 16, 2nd Corinthians 13: 1
1st Timothy 5: 19, Hebrews 10: 28

Verse 32 - 33: The witness of John the Baptist
John 1: 15, 18-19, 24, 29, 34, John 3: 31 – 36
Matthew 21: 26, Luke 20: 6

Verse 34: I say these things that you may be saved
Matthew 3: 1 – 12

Verse 35: The burning and shining lamp
John 8: 12, John 1: 5 – 7, John 3: 19

Verse 36: The witness of the Works of Jesus
John 3: 2, 14: 10 – 11, 20: 30 – 31, 17: 4

Verses 37 – 38: The witness of the Father
Matthew 3: 17, 17: 5, 1st John 5: 9 – 10

Application

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John 3: 2, 14: 10 – 11, 20: 30 – 31, 17: 4

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Matthew 3: 17, 17: 5, 1st John 5: 9 – 10

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