

THE EVIDENCE FOR JESUS

John 5:31-47

By Andy Manning

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Jesus made some outstanding claims.
 - i. He claimed to be greater than the temple. Mt 12:6
 - ii. He claimed to be Lord of the Sabbath. Lk 6:5
 - iii. He claimed that eternal life could only be found through belief in Him. Jn 3:16; Jn 11:5
 - iv. He commanded his listeners give up everything and devote themselves wholeheartedly to following Him, no matter the cost. Lk 9:23
 - v. He demanded that His followers love Him more than their own immediate family members. Mt 10:37-38
 - vi. He claimed to be greater than the prophet Jonah. Lk 11:31-32
 - vii. He claimed to be greater than Solomon. Lk 11:31-32
 - viii. He claimed to be the bread of life. Jn 6:35
 - ix. He claimed to be the light of the world. Jn 8:12
 - x. He claimed to be the resurrection and the life. Jn 11:25
 - xi. He claimed to be the way, the truth, and the life, and the only way to the Father. Jn 14:6
 - xii. He claimed to be the Alpha and Omega, the First and Last. Rev 22:13
 - xiii. He claimed to be the judge of the world. Mt 25:31-33
2. What kind of man makes these claims? There are only three possibilities. Either...
 - i. He is a liar. A conman.
 - ii. He is a lunatic. He's crazy.
 - iii. Or, He is the Lord. He is all that He said He was.
3. How do we know if Jesus is authentic? What evidence do we have?
4. In our text today, Jesus Himself presents four witnesses to make the case for Him.

II. TEXT: John 5:31-47

1. *31 "If I testify about myself, my testimony is not true.*
 - i. In other words, "my testimony is not considered true."
 - ii. According to Mosaic law, something would not hold up in court without at least two witnesses (Dt 17:6; 19:15; 2 Cor 13:1; Mt 18:16; 1 Tim 5:19).
2. *32 There is another who testifies about me, and I know that the testimony he gives about me is true. 33 You sent messengers to John, and he testified to the truth. 34 I don't receive human testimony, but I say these things so that you may be saved. 35 John was a burning and shining lamp, and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light.*
 - i. "I don't receive human testimony." Jesus was not impressed with human witnesses. First, He knew that people often lie. And second, He already

knows all things. He doesn't need human testimony, but John the Baptist was sent for the benefit of the Jews, to convince them of Jesus.

3. *36 "But I have a greater testimony than John's because of the works that the Father has given me to accomplish. These very works I am doing testify about me that the Father has sent me. 37 The Father who sent me has himself testified about me. You have not heard his voice at any time, and you haven't seen his form. 38 You don't have his word residing in you, because you don't believe the one he sent. 39 You pore over the Scriptures because you think you have eternal life in them, and yet they testify about me. 40 But you are not willing to come to me so that you may have life.*
4. *41 "I do not accept glory from people, 42 but I know you—that you have no love for God within you.*
 - i. "I do not accept glory from people."
 1. Jesus was not saying that we are not to glorify Him.
 - a. Earlier in this chapter Jesus said that the Father wants all people to glorify Jesus just as they glorify the Father (John 5:22-23).
 - b. There are examples in Scripture when Jesus did accept the worship of people:
 - i. After Jesus calmed the storm, the disciples worshiped him, and He didn't stop them (Mt 13:33).
 - ii. After Jesus healed a blind man, the man worshiped Jesus (John 9:38).
 - iii. When Jesus appeared to His disciples after the resurrection, they worshiped Him (Mt 28:17).
 2. He meant that He was not trying to please people. His aim was not to please people. His one aim was to please His heavenly Father. Other translations put in a more understandable way:
 - a. NLT "Your approval means nothing to me."
 - b. NCV "I don't need praise from people"
 - c. CEV "I don't care about human praise."
 - d. AMP "I crave no human honor, I look for no mortal fame"
 - e. The Message "I'm not interested in crowd approval"
 - f. LB "Your approval or disapproval means nothing to me"
 3. The apostle Paul said the same thing. **Galatians 1:10** "If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ."
 - a. If you want to be used by God, you cannot be a people-pleaser.
 - i. **Proverbs 29:25** "The fear of mankind is a snare."
 - ii. **Matthew 10:28** "Don't fear those who kill the body but are not able to kill the soul; rather fear him who is able to destroy both body and soul in hell."

- b. To serve God, you must be willing to be hated, mocked, rejected, and persecuted.
 - c. You must be willing to look like a fool for Jesus.
 - i. **1 Corinthians 4:10** “We are fools for Christ.”
 - d. Every day you have to die to your natural desire to please and impress people.
 - i. **1 Corinthians 15:31** “I die daily.”
 - ii. **John 12:24** “Truly I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains by itself. But if it dies, it produces much fruit.”
5. *43 I have come in my Father’s name, and yet you don’t accept me. If someone else comes in his own name, you will accept him.*
- i. Jesus was referring to the many false Messiahs that had come and were to come. The Jewish leaders were often deceived by these false Messiahs, but they rejected Christ.
 - ii. People are more likely to accept false teaching than the truth.
 - 1. There are people who reject Christ, but they believe in all sorts of supernaturalism – psychics, mediums, sorcery, tarot cards, fortune tellers, astrology – even there is much more evidence for the truth of Christ than any of those things.
 - 2. Have you ever noticed that you can find a church that is teaching the gospel truth, and it only has about fifty people, but then you can find a church that is teaching heresy, and they have ten thousand people? Why is that?
 - 3. Because false teachers, and false gods, and false prophets appeal to people’s self-interest.
 - 4. **William Barclay** “Why do people follow impostors? Because they make claims that correspond with people’s own desires. The impostors came promising empires and victory and material prosperity; Jesus came offering a cross. The characteristic of the impostor is the offer of the easy way; Jesus offered men and women the hard way of God. The impostors perished and Christ lives on.”
 - 5. Most people are not truly seeking God. They are seeking self-fulfillment, and if a religion or preacher promises to help them in their quest, they will sign up and show up.
 - 6. **Matthew 7:13-14** “13 Enter through the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the road broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who go through it. 14 How narrow is the gate and difficult the road that leads to life, and few find it.”
6. *44 How can you believe, since you accept glory from one another but don’t seek the glory that comes from the only God?*

- i. Why didn't the Jewish leaders accept Jesus? Because their ultimate goal was not to please God, but to impress people. They sought the praise of men rather than favor with God.
 - ii. The Jewish leaders did all sorts of things for the applause of men. **Mark 12:38-40** 38 He also said in his teaching, "Beware of the scribes, who want to go around in long robes and who want greetings in the marketplaces, 39 the best seats in the synagogues, and the places of honor at banquets. 40 They devour widows' houses and say long prayers just for show. These will receive harsher judgment."
 - iii. The Jewish leaders were so focused on impressing and being accepted by one another, that they gave up on trying to please God.
 - iv. This gives us an insight into what prevents many people from accepting Christ, and many Christians from moving forward with Christ. Do you want to please and impress people, or God? You can't do both.
 - v. To move forward with God, at some people you have to say, "I don't care what people will do or think or say, I'm moving forward with God."
7. *45 Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father. Your accuser is Moses, on whom you have set your hope. 46 For if you believed Moses, you would believe me, because he wrote about me. 47 But if you don't believe what he wrote, how will you believe my words?"*
- i. So how do we know that Jesus is truly the Son of God? In this passage He presents four witnesses who testify about Him.

III. THE FOURFOLD WITNESS TO JESUS

1. The forerunner – John the Baptist.

- i. **John 5:33** "You sent messengers to John, and he testified to the truth."
 - 1. Who was John? He was Israel's first prophet in over four hundred years. He stayed out in the wilderness, and massive crowds would go out to hear him preach. He dressed funny – a camel-hair garment and a leather belt around his waist. He ate a funny diet – locusts and wild honey, and he abstained from alcohol. He preached a message of repentance, and we call him John the Baptist because he told people to get baptized as an outward symbol of their inner commitment of repentance. He was also the cousin of Jesus, and his unique assignment was to prepare Israel for the coming Messiah.
 - 2. Back in John 1, the Jews sent messengers to find out who John was. They asked if he was the Messiah, or Elijah, or the Prophet. What was John's testimony about Jesus?
 - a. He did not claim to be the Messiah. **John 1:20** He didn't deny it but confessed, "I am not the Messiah."
 - b. His calling was to prepare Israel to meet the Messiah. **John 1:23** "He said, "I am a voice of one crying out in the

wilderness: Make straight the way of the Lord,—just as Isaiah the prophet said.”

- c. He pointed to the greatness of Jesus. **John 1:26-27** “26 I baptize with water,” John answered them. “Someone stands among you, but you don’t know him. 27 He is the one coming after me, whose sandal strap I’m not worthy to untie.”
 - d. He pointed out Jesus. **John 1:29-30** 29 The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! 30 This is the one I told you about: ‘After me comes a man who ranks ahead of me, because he existed before me.’
 - e. He identified Jesus as the Son of God. God had told John to baptize people, and that one day he would see the Spirit descend and resting on a man, and that would be the Son of God. John saw this happen when he baptized Jesus. **John 1:34** “I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God.”
- ii. **John 5:35** “John was a burning and shining lamp, and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light.”
1. John had three qualities that every Christian should emulate.
 - a. He was burning.
 - i. He was on fire for God.
 1. God was his one pure and holy passion; his one magnificent obsession; his one glorious ambition in life.
 2. You should be on fire for God. Full of zeal and passion and energy and enthusiasm and excitement.
 3. I see too many Christians who have lost their fire.
 4. I see too many Christians who are filled with passion, but seem to be bored with Jesus.
 - a. Passionate about their hobbies.
 - b. Passionate about their love life.
 - c. Passionate about their children.
 - d. Passionate about their education.
 - e. Passionate about their sports.
 - f. Passionate about their fitness.
 - g. Passionate about their fashion.
 - h. Passionate about their career.
 - i. Passionate about politics.

- iv. **Titus 2:14** “He gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to cleanse for himself a people for his own possession, eager to do good works.”
- c. He was a lamp.
 - i. A lamp helps people to see.
 - ii. He was a devoted evangelist. His goal was to point people to Jesus. To encourage people to become more devoted to God.
 - iii. That’s what we should be doing with our lives. Pointing people to Jesus. Starting with our own children and grandchildren, and then moving out from there.

2. The miracles.

- i. **John 5:36** “But I have a greater testimony than John’s because of the works that the Father has given me to accomplish. These very works I am doing testify about me that the Father has sent me.”
- ii. “works” = miracles.
- iii. The first witness that testified about Jesus was John the Baptist. The second is the miracles that He performed.
 1. When John was in prison, he sent messengers to Jesus to ask if he was the Messiah. Jesus pointed to His miracles. **Matthew 11:4-5** “4 Jesus replied to them, “Go and report to John what you hear and see: 5 The blind receive their sight, the lame walk, those with leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor are told the good news,”
 2. Nicodemus was convinced that Jesus was sent by God because of His miracles. **John 3:2** “This man came to him at night and said, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God, for no one could perform these signs you do unless God were with him.”
 3. In Peter’s Pentecost sermon, he argued that Jesus was sent by God by pointing to His miracles. **Acts 2:22** “Fellow Israelites, listen to these words: This Jesus of Nazareth was a man attested to you by God with miracles, wonders, and signs that God did among you through him, just as you yourselves know.”
- iv. The New Testament records about three dozen miracles of Jesus, but we know from John that He performed many more. **John 20:30** “Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples that are not written in this book.”
- v. The Gospel of John highlights eight of Jesus’ miracles and refers to them as signs. After turning the water into wine, John wrote, **John 2:11** “Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee.”

- vi. The Eight Signs in the Gospel of John:
 1. Changing water into wine. 2:1-11
 2. Healing an official's son. 4:43-54
 3. Healing a disabled man at the Bethesda pool. 5:1-15
 4. Feeding the 5,000. 6:1-14
 5. Walking on water. 6:16-21
 6. Healing the man born blind. 9:1-12
 7. Raising Lazarus from the dead. 11:1-44
 8. The miraculous catch of fish. 21:1-14

3. The Father.

- i. **John 5:37-38** "37 The Father who sent me has himself testified about me. You have not heard his voice at any time, and you haven't seen his form. 38 You don't have his word residing in you, because you don't believe the one he sent."
- ii. How did the Father testify about Jesus? Two ways.
 1. Audibly. On two occasions the Father audibly testified that Jesus is the Son of God – the Baptism, and the transfiguration.
 - a. Baptism. **Matthew 3:17** And a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased."
 - b. Transfiguration. **Matthew 17:5** While he was still speaking, suddenly a bright cloud covered them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased. Listen to him!"
 2. Spiritually. When we hear the gospel, the Father speaks to our hearts and tells us that Jesus is the Son of God, and draws us to Him.
 - a. **John 6:44** "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up on the last day."
 - b. **2 Corinthians 4:4-6** For God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of God's glory in the face of Jesus Christ.
 - c. Some believe that this inner drawing of God is irresistible (Calvinists), while others believe it is resistible (Arminians). There's a verse in this passage that says that God's grace is not irresistible.
 - i. **John 5:40** "But you are not willing to come to me so that you may have life."
 - ii. Jesus rebuked the Jewish leaders for their unwillingness to come to Him for eternal life. It's not God's fault that they refuse to come to Jesus, but their own. God always draws us, but we have to be willing.

- d. **Roger Olson** describes prevenient grace as “Enabling grace that restores the freedom of the will.” “The calling, enlightening, enabling grace that God implants in a human heart because of his love and because of the work of Christ. But this grace is resistible, not irresistible. It is given in some measure to everyone.”
- e. The classical Arminian position agrees with Calvinism on the point of total depravity. That apart from God’s prevenient grace, no one seeks God, no one turns to God, no one believes in Christ. But when the Gospel is heard, the Holy Spirit opens our eyes and hearts and draws us to Him, and gives us the ability to repent and believe.
 - i. Calvinists believe that God only gives the prevenient grace to some – the elect -- and it is irresistible, while leaving the rest of humanity to die in their sins without the chance of salvation.
 - ii. Arminians believe that God gives this prevenient grace to everyone, but it is resistible; once God frees our will, we must exercise that will in repentance and faith.

4. The Old Testament.

- i. **John 5:39** “You pore over the Scriptures because you think you have eternal life in them, and yet they testify about me.”
- ii. The fourth witness is the Scriptures – the Old Testament. Jesus said that it testified about Him.
- iii. “You pore over the Scriptures.” This verse is packed with insight and application.
 1. It describes how we should treat the Bible. The phrase “pore over” implies diligent scrutiny in investigating the Scriptures (MacArthur).
 2. It condemns us in that some non-Christians (I.e. Jews) study the Bible more diligently than Christians. Some non-Christians know the Bible better than us. What a shame!
 3. It reveals that it is possible to know all about the Bible, but not know and love God. It is possible to be passionate about the Bible, but not be passionate about God. It is possible to love the Bible, but not be a Christian.
 4. It shows us that it is possible to know all about the Bible but miss the point. The point of Scripture is not to give us a bunch rules to follow, but introduce us to Jesus Christ and teach us how to love and serve Him. The point of the Old Testament is to show us that we are sinners, and God is holy, and that atonement must be made for our sins, and God is going to send the Redeemer. The New Testament

then comes along and introduces us to the One who atones for us – Jesus Christ.

- iv. On several occasions Jesus said that the Old Testament pointed to Him.
 - 1. **John 5:45-46** “45 Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father. Your accuser is Moses, on whom you have set your hope. 46 For if you believed Moses, you would believe me, because he wrote about me.”
 - 2. After Jesus’ resurrection, He appeared to two disciples who were traveling to Emmaus. They still didn’t understand Christ’s death and resurrection, so Jesus told them the following.
 - a. **Luke 24:25-27** 25 He said to them, “How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! 26 Wasn’t it necessary for the Messiah to suffer these things and enter into his glory?” 27 Then beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted for them the things concerning himself in all the Scriptures.
- v. Apologist **Josh McDowell** “the Old Testament, written over a one-thousand-year period, contains nearly three hundred references to the coming Messiah. All of these were fulfilled in Jesus Christ, and they establish a solid confirmation of His credentials as the Messiah.”

IV. CONCLUSION

- 1. According to Jewish law, a person cannot be convicted without the testimony of at least two witnesses. In the US, all you need is one witness, if the jury believes them. Yet in this argument Jesus present not one, not two, not three, but four witnesses who testified that He is the Messiah, the Son of God.
- 2. Yet even after hearing all of these witnesses, most of the Jews still rejected Christ.
 - i. That shows that for many, no amount of evidence will convince them to turn to Christ.
 - ii. The problem is not a lack of evidence, but a lack of desire. These people are not willing to come to Christ. They are not willing to repent and submit to Him.
- 3. What about you? Have you accepted Christ as your Savior and Lord?