

WE HAVE SEEN HIS GLORY

The Glory of God in the Word of God

INTRODUCTION

We have before us a preliminary trial as to the identity of Jesus. He has asserted that He is God. But Jesus realizes that in a legal sense His testimony is not valid (*"If I alone bear witness about myself, my testimony is not true."* (John 5:31, ESV)). Biblical law requires 2 or more witnesses (*"On the evidence of two witnesses or of three witnesses the one who is to die shall be put to death; a person shall not be put to death on the evidence of one witness."* (Deuteronomy 17:6, ESV)). This principle is carried out throughout Scripture and Jesus employs it here. So, Jesus calls, in his own defense 3 witnesses to testify as to who He really is.

- a. Witness #1. John the Baptist (vv33-35);
- b. Witness #2. The "works" of Jesus (v36); and
- c. Witness #3. The Scriptures (the witness of the Father (cf: v37)(vv37-39) [It is this point that I am seeking to apply this morning.]

Then Jesus does an amazing thing. The accused becomes the prosecutor. The defendant becomes the challenger. The respondent in the case, goes on the offensive (vv40-47).

TEXT: John 5:30-47 (ESV)

EXPOSITION

The Rule of Law – 2 or more Witnesses (vv30-31)

On first reading it seems rather strange that Jesus would say, "my testimony is not true."¹ There are 2 things happening here. First, in a legal sense, His witness to Himself would not have been valid in the courtroom and Jesus knows that. Secondly, in a spiritual sense, Jesus is saying that His very nature is such that He "can do nothing on [His] own."² With these 2 realities, He calls 3 witnesses to defend His claim to be who He says He is.

Witness #1. John the Baptist (vv33-35)

In a brilliant display of courtroom theatrics, Jesus calls a friendly witness. Jesus was aware that the Jews had already approached John in John 1:19-28. They asked him who he was. He said that he's not the Messiah, but that Jesus was (quoting the prophet Isaiah) the Promised Messiah. Jesus goes on to say though that His credentials don't rest on John himself. They rest on John's message which is the Word of

¹ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Jn 5:31). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

² [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Jn 5:30). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

God. That word is found in Psalm 132:17-18 (a passage these Jews knew very well). Notice what the Psalmist writes:

“There I will make a horn to sprout for David; I have prepared a lamp for my anointed. His enemies I will clothe with shame, but on him his crown will shine.” (Psalm 132:17–18, ESV)

Jesus interprets those verses to say that John the Baptist is that “lamp” for His Anointed (His Christ). He is that Christ. He is the one that will be crowned King. John the Baptist had already affirmed that.

Witness #2. The “works” of Jesus (v36)

The second witness was also a witness that the Jews had already recognized. It was the works of Jesus. These works including the miracles, the signs and the wonders that Christ performed. Do you remember Nicodemus? Do you remember what he said to Jesus? *“This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him.”* (John 3:2, ESV)

These Pharisees already knew this was a credible testimony. Nicodemus had said that. These miracles bore witness to the fact that He was sent from God (v36b).

Now Jesus invites the 3rd witness.

Witness #3. The Scriptures (the witness of the Father (v37)(vv37-39)

Jesus asserts that His Father gives witness to who He is, and this testimony is found within Holy Scripture. The Pharisees had never heard the Father’s voice. They had never seen the Father. And to make matters worse they fail to understand and obey their Scriptures. His critical indictment was, *“you search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me,”* (John 5:39, ESV).

Now that last statement would have cut like a knife. The Pharisees were deeply concerned with following the law, very precisely; and had thus separated themselves from the great mass of the populace by their strict adherence to the minutia of their legal tradition. All members were scrutinized and criticized when they fell short and highly praised when they observed accurately. As a rule, the Pharisees were self-righteousness and smug in their delusion that they were pleasing to God because they kept the Law.

Jesus makes this humbling critique: you don’t interpret the Scriptures properly.

The Respondent goes on the Offensive (vv40-47).

So, Jesus now places the Pharisees on trial and accuses them of misusing Scripture. The very Scriptures they love to meticulously study reveals Jesus to be the Christ, *“yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life”* (John 5:40, ESV), Jesus says.

Contrarily he also accuses them of listening and following those who praise them and flatter them. Jesus makes it clear that He does what He does, not to get praise from men or particularly just to get glory from the Pharisees. He is who He is; and He does what He does, to “seek the glory that comes from the only God?”³

And in the end when they stand before God in judgment, the man they revere and hope in (i.e., Moses) is going to be the one that condemns them because it was Moses that wrote about Christ, but they did not believe it.

The Application

This third witness finds Jesus reprimanding the Jewish religious authorities on resting on their study of Scripture; their meticulous study of Scripture, yet they stood sentenced. What was so wrong with their interpretation of the Scripture? Answer. They studied it and applied it so they could be pious, moral people. They studied it and sought to obey it to receive the praise of man. They studied it to feel better about themselves.

What’s wrong with that? They failed to see “they that bear witness about me [Jesus]”⁴; “you do not have the love of God within you”⁵; “you will receive him [the person who flatters you]”⁶.

We can take this encounter of Jesus with these Pharisees and learn 3 critical elements to Bible Study. This Church has always emphasized the need for healthy Bible Study. We have encouraged personal and group study. We all want to learn and apply the Bible in ways that will produce good results. From this encounter with the Pharisees we learn 3 things that will work toward a productive, God-glorifying study of the Scriptures. We need to:

1. See Christ in the Scriptures.
2. Study for the love of God.
3. Not study to be flattered.

³ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Jn 5:44). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

⁴ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Jn 5:39). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

⁵ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Jn 5:42). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

⁶ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Jn 5:43). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

#1. See Christ in the Scriptures

Jesus said to these Pharisees, “. . . *it is they that bear witness about me*” (John 5:39, ESV). Jesus is the main point of the entire Bible. He said so himself (Luke 24:44-48). Philip saw it (John 1:45⁷). Peter recognized it (“the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours” - 1 Pet 1:10-12). Paul knew it (2 Cor 1:20⁸). We often see Christ in the Old Testament as it prefigured His mission, His suffering and His victory over sin and death. Learning to read your Bible with your Jesus lens is critical to understanding the Bible.

Reading the Bible through the Jesus lens is reading it the way it was intended. It keeps our reading, understanding, teaching, and preaching properly focused on God’s redemptive program that centers on his own Son. There’s several resources that can help you, starting with today’s SS class. I’ve also added a Recommended Readingⁱ at the end of your notes.

#2. Study for the Love of God

If you and I read the Bible and seek to study the Bible without a deep affection for Christ, we will reduce our study to rigidly obeying commands, making resolutions that won’t stick and reducing Bible study to willpower. If your willpower is like mine it isn’t very powerful. The Psalm writer testified this way: “*How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!*” (Psalm 119:103, ESV). Don’t you long for that reaction to the Scriptures?

Love for God in the reading and study of the Word is a supernatural activity. Without the grace of God, it is impossible. Therefore, prayer is an essential part of preparing to read/study. Prayer is essential part of the art of reading. Failure to love God is sin and when we treat it as sin, God in His mercy enables us to “. . . *both to will and to work for his good pleasure*” (Philippians 2:13, ESV).

If you and I are not reading our Bibles, the problem is not time, nor is it literacy – it’s love. That’s a dangerous problem. If you and I are not loving God through the reading and study of His Word, we will never understand it.

Lastly,

⁷ “Philip found Nathanael and said to him, “We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.”” (John 1:45, ESV)

⁸ “For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory.” (2 Corinthians 1:20, ESV)

#3. Not Study to be Flattered

The Bible is not intended to flatter us. Paul Tripp writes, [We] “need to take seriously what the Bible has to say about the presence and power of remaining sin to know the great danger in allowing anyone to live separate from the essential ministry of the body of Christ.”⁹ I made up a new rhyme this week. It goes like this:

*Little Jack Horner
Sat in the corner,
Reading his Bible, and nigh,
He read a few lines,
Then thought with his mind,
“What a good boy am I”*

Listen to what Paul says, “*Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God*” (2 Corinthians 7:1, ESV). James views the Scripture as a mirror¹⁰, a mirror to see who we really are. By God’s grace we not only see our sin and where we need correction, we see Christ and the Gospel that gives us hope, joy and encouragement.

“*All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness*” (2 Timothy 3:16, ESV), by God’s grace may we use it that way.

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1. Clowney, Edmund P., *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture*. Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2003
2. Fee, Gordon D., and Douglas Stuart. *How to Read the Bible Book by Book*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002.
3. Fee, Gordon D., and Douglas Stuart. *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*. Second edition. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003.
4. Murray, David, *Jesus on Every Page*. Nashville, Tenn.: Thomas Nelson, 2013

⁹ Tripp, Paul David. *Dangerous Calling: Confronting the Unique Challenges of Pastoral Ministry* (p. 69). Crossway. Kindle Edition.

¹⁰ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Jas 1:23). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.