

## JESUS' TESTIMONY ABOUT HIMSELF

John 5:31-47

Key Verse: 5:36

"I have testimony weightier than that of John. For the very work that the Father has given me to finish, and which I am doing, testifies that the Father has sent me."

In chapter 5, Jesus healed a man who had been a paralytic for 38 years. This healing clearly shows us that Jesus is the giver of life. But the Jews refused to believe that Jesus is the Son of God. Rather, the Jews considered that the paralytic who carried his mat on the Sabbath was working on the Sabbath. Thus, they accused Jesus who had healed the paralytic on the Sabbath. In verses 16-30, Jesus explains that he is the giver of life, and that he is the giver of eternal life to whoever believes in him. Still, the Jews hardened their hearts. They wanted to demonstrate their intrepid authority and dignity as the religious leaders of the times by persecuting Jesus. Jesus had mercy on them and gave them testimonies about himself that he is the Son of God. May God teach us that Jesus is the Son of God.

### I. John's testimony about Jesus is true (31-36)

First, the meaning of testimony (31-32). Look at verses 31-32. "If I testify about myself, my testimony is not valid. There is another who testifies in my favor, and I know that his testimony about me is valid." In this verse, "another who testifies in my favor" is John the Baptist. In the past, the word "testimony" was the same as "witness." In the past, the word "witness" implied martyrdom. The early Christians were innumerable martyred in order to witness to the word of God, that is, the good news of [Jesus Christ](#). Many people in the past were willing to die when they heard the word of God that all men are equal in God. Those who were oppressed by their masters and slave drivers were happy to die after hearing the word of God that if men die their physical bodies become clumps of dust, but their immortal souls will be with Jesus forever. Those who heard the gospel were happy to witness to the word of God to those who had not heard it. When they were ready to witness to the word of God, first they were baptized to express their decision of faith to become martyrs. In view of history, the word "witness" has the implication of the word of God and martyrdom spirit.

In verse 31, Jesus said, "If I testify about myself, my testimony is not valid." Here, the word "testimony" is the same as the word of God. Exodus 16:34 says, "As the Lord commanded Moses, Aaron put the manna in front of the Testimony, that it might be kept." Leviticus 16:13 says, "He is to put the incense on the fire before the Lord, and the smoke of the incense will conceal the atonement cover above the Testimony, so that he will not die." The Testimony is the other name of the Ten Commandments. In the [ark of God](#) there were Aaron's rod, a bunch of manna and the Testimony. Aaron's rod symbolizes the almighty power of God. Manna symbolizes God's sustenance of human life. Testimony, that is, [the Ten Commandments](#) of God, symbolizes the word of eternal life.

The word of God is based on the Ten Commandments, and it has many other names. If we read the Psalms, we can find many kinds of names for

the word of God. The word of God is called "statutes, precepts, decrees, commands, and laws." Psalm 119:2 says, "Blessed are they who keep his statutes and seek him with all their heart." Psalm 119:56 says, "This has been my practice: I obey your precepts." Psalm 119:12 says, "Praise be to you, O Lord; teach me your decrees." Psalm 119:64 says, "The earth is filled with your love, O Lord; teach me your decrees." Psalm 119:6 says, "Then I would not be put to shame when I consider all your commands." Psalm 119:20 says, "My soul is consumed with longing for your laws at all times."

Jesus said in verse 31, "If I testify about myself, my testimony is not valid." But this verse is a rebuke to the Jews. Its real meaning is that Jesus is the Testimony of God; Jesus is the Word of God. John 1:1,2 says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning." Jesus does not need human testimony, for Jesus is the First Cause and Jesus is God. But the legalistic Jews demanded witnesses who could testify that Jesus is the Son of God. They were masters of the Pentateuch. They knew that all the teachings of the Pentateuch point to Jesus, the Son of God. But they deceived their conscience and decided not to believe that Jesus is the Son of God.

Second, John the Baptist is Jesus' testimony (32-35). Look at verse 32. "There is another who testifies in my favor, and I know that his testimony about me is valid." In this verse, Jesus is standing John the Baptist as his testimony. Look at verse 33. "You have sent to John and he has testified to the truth." The Jews had sent many people to John and learned that he testified about the Son of God. John had testified to the truth, our Lord Jesus Christ. Many people heard John's message of the baptism of repentance and beat their breasts, hitting the ground with their fists, crying loudly and repented their sins. Many kinds of people repented (Lk 3:10-14). Tax collectors repented their sins. Prostitutes repented of their sin of selling their youth for money. Roman soldiers also repented their sins of extortion and violence. Because of John's spiritual influence, many believed that John was the prophet with the spirit and power of Elijah (Mt 17:10-13). So John the Baptist was worthy of being the testimony of Jesus. But the Jews did not believe in the Son because of their political ambition.

We can see John's testimony about Jesus. John 1:19,20 says, "Now this was John's testimony when the Jews of Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him who he was. He did not fail to confess, but confessed freely, 'I am not the Christ.'" People wondered if John the Baptist were the Christ because of his spiritual authority and power. But he clearly testified, "I am not the Christ." John 1:8 says, "The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world." John testified that Jesus is the true light for all mankind. John testified that Jesus came from God and is the Son of God. John 3:31 says, "The one who comes from above is above all; the one who is from the earth belongs to the earth, and speaks as one from the earth. The one who comes from heaven is above all." This verse tells us that Jesus came from God. He is the Son of God, and Jesus speaks and acts like God. On the other hand, those who belong to the earth speak as those from the earth, like the Jews. In this verse, John testifies about Jesus that he came from God, while John himself came from his old mommy, Elizabeth. At that time, John was the voice of God for the

suffering people, even for the people in the palace. Therefore, nobody could ignore John's testimony about Jesus. Jesus concluded John's testimony about himself by saying that John was a lamp that burned and gave light for a while (35). Still, John could not give life to men. But Jesus gives men the true light. The true light is equivalent to eternal life. As he said in verse 34, Jesus came to save men from their sins. Verse 34b says, "...but I mention it that you may be saved." John not only testified about Jesus that he is the Son of God; he also testified so that many might believe in him and be saved.

Third, weightier testimony (36). Weightier testimony is God's testimony about Jesus. Look at verse 36. "I have testimony weightier than that of John. For the very work that the Father has given me to finish, and which I am doing, testifies that the Father has sent me." This is true. We have studied that Jesus is the Son of God through many events. When Jesus came to this world, he attended a wedding ceremony at Cana in Galilee. At the wedding ceremony the wine was short. Then Jesus ordered the servants to fill the jars with water (2:7). Jesus blessed marriage again so that those who believe in him will be happy when they marry. His blessing the wedding at Cana in Galilee was designated as the first miraculous sign, even though he performed many signs previously.

Jesus also talked with Nicodemus in the late night (3:1-21). Nicodemus was a man of fame and wealth, but he was a suicide candidate. He might have taken a heavy dose of sleeping pills but still could not sleep. So he came to Jesus and asked how to experience the miraculous power so that he could cope with his depressed condition. Then Jesus told him that he must be born again so that he could see the kingdom of God and enter the kingdom of God. This is a story for all yuppie people in the world.

Once, Jesus was passing through Samaria. He was alone at the well of Jacob, and his disciples went into the village to get some Big Macs or tuna fish sandwiches--and some drinks. While they were away, a woman was coming to the well to get some water. Jesus talked first to her by saying, "Will you give me a drink?" (4:7) By asking a favor of a smelly woman, Jesus opened her heart until he could talk with her about the living water welling up to eternal life (4:14). When she talked with Jesus, she could experience the life of God in her soul and was happy for the first time. As we studied in chapter 5, Jesus healed a man who had been an invalid for 38 years. Jesus commanded him, "Get up! Pick up your mat and walk" (5:8). In this event, we see Jesus' divine power and divine compassion, and that Jesus is the giver of new life.

As we have studied, all these events testify that Jesus is the giver of life. The work of God through Jesus testifies that Jesus is the Son of God. Also, God himself testifies that Jesus is the Son of God. When we study the Bible, we find that God gave man the primitive promise of salvation in Genesis 3:15. Next, God gave Abraham a specific promise that he would be a blessing in the work of salvation (Ge 12:2). Through David God confirmed his promise of world salvation by saying that from the root of Jesse the Messiah would come. Isaiah 9:6 depicts the image of Christ as the Mighty God and the Everlasting Father and the Prince of Peace. Finally, Jesus came to this world as was promised. This is the weightier testimony.

## II. The result of superficial Bible study (37-47)

First, the Jews did not hear God's voice (37-40). The Father sent his one and only Son, and he was doing the life-giving work of God and teaching the truth of the kingdom of God. But the Jews never believed. Rather, they persecuted him and wanted to destroy him. Jesus did not find their mistakes in their outward activities. Rather, Jesus found that their problem was their superficial Bible study. As we know well, the Jews were masters of the Pentateuch. They knew very well about Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. Most of them memorized the law of Moses. Through these studies, they had to understand that the core of the Pentateuch is the Ten Commandments. Through the study of the Ten Commandments they had to learn how to love God and how to love their neighbor. Moreover, they had to establish a love relationship with God and with their neighbors and with their wives and even with their puppies. However, they studied the Bible ritually, or to get a better score in order to become a Pharisee or a Jewish community leader. Through their Bible study they didn't hear God's voice. They could neither hear God's voice nor see God's form (37). Here, the word "form" means the substance of God. If they had studied the Bible from their hearts, they could have seen the kingdom of God and entered the kingdom of God and have had the fear of God and also had God in their souls. But they didn't have anything in their hearts except political intrigues. This was not only the Jews' problem; it may also be modern people's problem.

The December 2 1996 issue of Newsweek magazine reported international math and science contest scores. Five thousand brilliant students from 40 nations had a contest in math and science. America was at the bottom of the mediocre class. America received 500 points. If one point were subtracted, America would have dropped down to the bottom class of the world. U.S. educational experts made an apology that American students study for more hours and do more homework than students from other countries, but American teachers only teach them how to solve problems technically and never emphasize the mastery of broader principles. So students can solve a geometry proof but can't explain why a triangle has 180 degrees. Due to a lack of spirit, the unique world power nation, America, is almost a bottom class nation in math and science tests. These Americans have to study for the sake of study, not just for the sake of acquiring credits. The Jews studied the Book of the Law, but they never found the spirit of the law of God. So they did not know God. They did not know God's testimony about his Son. This is the reason Jesus rebuked them very severely. Look at verses 39-40. "You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life."

Second, the Jews liked men's praise (41-47). Look at verse 41. "I do not accept praise from men...." If Jesus had wanted men's praise, he would not have had any persecution. As the crowd wanted, he would have become a king of the Jews (6:15). But Jesus did not accept praise from men. He lived for the glory of God. So he received one persecution after another. Sometimes we wonder why we receive persecution. It is because we live for the glory of God, not for the praise of men. But the Jews really wanted men's praise, because they lived in the community system. In their community, who became the chief was always

the crucial problem. In the Jewish community, the vice-chief must have attempted to commit suicide many times out of his envy of the chief of the community. So the Jews decorated themselves with long robes. They also meticulously kept all kinds of rituals and traditions in order to impress the people of the community. In short, they had no idea to believe in God or worship God. They had no idea to live for the glory of God as shepherds for the suffering flock of God's sheep. They wanted praise from one another. So they became practical atheists in the robes of religious leaders (44). These practical atheists persecuted Jesus. Here we learn that when we live for the glory of God, persecutions follow, as a tree is followed by shade.

Jesus finalized his rebuke of the Jews on the basis of their Bible knowledge and God's mission for them. Jesus said, "You know the law of God through Moses. But you didn't study the law of Moses from your hearts. So you don't believe in me" (45-47). It seems to be a light rebuke of them. But in fact, to these legalists who claimed the law of Moses as God's word, it was not a light rebuke. They abused the law of Moses and used it as a handle for their selfishness. As a result, they were useless to God.

Today we learned that the Jews studied the law of Moses superficially. So they could not recognize Jesus as the Son of God. We must ask God's mercy that our Bible study may not be superficial, but may be done to know God and his Son Jesus Christ.