

22. THE FIVE WITNESSES OF JESUS (5:31-47)

After asserting His deity even times and in seven ways, Jesus appeals to five witnesses to corroborate this truth. He states His testimony concerning Himself is not based on Himself alone, but also on others' testimony about Him (vv31-32). So He transitions from presenting His own defence of His equality with the Father (vv17-30) to presenting the testimony of these five witnesses.



According to the Old Testament and central to later Jewish law, two witnesses are necessary to prove a capital case (cf. Deu. 17:6; 19:15). This principle was put in

place by God because the testimony of an individual is not sufficient to determine one's innocence or guilt. Even within modern legal systems, the testimony of an individual does not stand up in a court of law unless there are corroborating witnesses. Jesus highlights the principle later in John 8:14-18, and also in Matthew 18:16 within the context of church discipline. Paul too reminds the Corinthians that he would come amongst them to rebuke and discipline with charges confirmed by two or three witnesses (cf. 2Co. 13:1). This pattern is maintained throughout the early church, as seen in 1 Timothy 5:19 when the church prohibited a charge brought against an elder unless supported by two or three witnesses.

The point that Jesus makes in this section is that His claims are true not just because He says so (v31), but because there is the testimony of several others – all of whom the Jews witness for themselves in one way or another – with the most important being that of the Father (v32). So in the rest of chapter 5, Jesus presents the testimonies these witnesses to support the claims He makes in verses 17 to 30.



Note: Although Jesus does not identify the “another” (Gk. *Allos*) witness that He refers to in verse 32, He uses a word that in Greek means “another of the same kind”. God the Father is the only One who is of the same kind as Jesus, therefore, this must be a reference to Him. We will look at the witness of the Father later in this study.



THE WITNESS OF JOHN (VV33-35)

We have already seen in our previous studies that the Jews are well aware of John the Baptist's ministry and testimony concerning Jesus (see [The Testimony of John](#) and [The Firstfruits of John's Testimony](#) studies) and are even willing to accept his ministry for a while. Matthew 3:5 further confirms that large crowds from Jerusalem, Judea, and the region around the Jordan go out to see and hear him (cp. Mark 1:5). Their interest is based on the fact that there has not been a prophet in Israel for over 400 years and the reality of their current oppression under the Romans. John's ministry gives them some semblance of hope and so they flock to him hoping that he will be the answer to their prayers. They think that perhaps he is Elijah or even the Messiah Himself.

However, John's ministry is not as they expect as he comes preaching repentance of sin and does not call for a coup against their enemies. His challenges even include the sins of the religious and political lead-

Jesus' Seven Appeals to Deity

Unity in...

... work (vv17-18)

... knowledge (v19)

... love (v20)

... power over death (v21)

... glory and honour (vv22-23)

... giving eternal life (vv24-26)

... final judgement of man (vv29-31)



ers of Israel. Although many Jews agree with John's confrontation of these leaders, their rejoicing over him lasts only for a short time. This leads to the leaders becoming antagonistic toward him, and because he does not reclaim control from the Romans, the Jews start to chase after the next apparent messiah.



Note: The Apostle John uses the past tense of the verbs here – “*you sent*” and “*he has borne witness*” – implying that John is no longer present, perhaps he has already been executed.

Based on everyone's knowledge of John, not only of who he is, but also of his testimony concerning Christ, Jesus presents John the Baptist as His first witness. Note that He refers to John's witness as a lamp. What is a lamp's purpose? It is to give light, to illuminate. In the sense that Jesus is talking about here, to give enlightenment, to illuminate the truth (cp. Psa. 119:105). That is exactly what John does. We saw this in 1:19-34 when he pointed Jesus out to the people and to his own disciples, and again in 3:22-36 when he exalts Jesus and humbles himself. You see, the purpose of a light is not to get all the attention. No one turns a light on in a room at night and declare, “Wow, what an awesome light bulb”. Rather the bulb shows up what is already in the room. John is only a lamp, not the true Light (1:9).

However, appealing to John is somewhat immaterial to Jesus' defence, as He does not need the witness of man. Why then does He use John as a witness. I suggest that there are three reasons.

1. John's testimony is current and something they are all familiar with. He is taking them from the most obvious testimony that they paid attention to for a time – hence his comment, “*you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light*” - to the lesser obvious testimonies that they missed or ignored. This progression will become more apparent in our study. Even the religious leaders acknowledge the John's witness when they send a delegation to question him (cf. 1:19-24)
2. John's recognition as a prophet. Although he refuses to be identified as “*the*” prophet (cf. 1:20), it does not mean that he is rejecting that he is a prophet – He is a priest by birth (Zechariah, his father is a priest) and he is appointment a prophet by God.
3. The content of John's testimony – he points out that Jesus is “*the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world*”. Jesus' mission is salvation (cf. 3:17), and so by appealing to John first He is reminding them of this mission. In fact, John even declares Jesus to be the very “*Son of God*” (cf. 1:34)



QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION OR STUDY

1. The Jews recognise and accept John's testimony, but only for a short while, soon ignoring it when other things begin to appeal to their interests – e.g. Jesus' sign. Is this attitude and behaviour still true in some people's lives today? If so, how is it seen?



THE WITNESS OF WORKS (V36)

Jesus brings up His second witness in verse 36, His works (see also John 10:37-38). This witness of Jesus' works is greater than John because they are of such a nature that they can only be performed by God. All the signs Jesus performs require power and authority that only God possesses and

bear witness that Jesus is sent by God the Father. This is also a rather obvious witness as many of the Jews witness these works and spread the news about them. We had a hint of that in 4:47 when the royal official hears about Jesus and seeks Him out to heal His son. Even the signs that Jesus performs in Jerusalem causes a stir among the religious leaders that results in Nicodemus, a teacher of the Law, to say, *“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”* (3:2).

By using His works as a witness, Jesus appeals to the culture of the day. For the Jews, what one says is not enough – words have to be backed up with action. We have seen this already in our study. So by appealing to His works, Jesus is essentially stating, “You have heard what I have said, and you have seen me put those words into action, what more can I say and do to convince you of my claim?”. But this is still insufficient for the Jews, and even cause some controversy, for in Matthew 12, after Jesus heals a man who is demon-possessed and blind, the Pharisees say, *“It is only by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, that this man casts out demons”*.

However, there is a link between John the Baptist and Jesus’ works that we need to bear in mind. In Matthew 11, John is in prison and sends his disciples to Jesus to ask if He is the One or should they wait for another. Jesus’ response in verses 4 to 6 appeals to His works as evidence to testify to John that He is indeed the one – *“Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight”* etc.

There are two lessons for us here.

1. Witnessing a miracle is insufficient to cause someone to believe. People often say things like, “If I witness a miracle, then I will believe”, or “If God removes the pain and suffering in my life, then I will believe”. Although the saying goes, seeing is believing, it is not always the case. In fact, it is less often the case. Just consider how many people in Israel witness Jesus’ signs and compare that to how few people believe in Him. We see that same in the early church with the signs and wonders performed by the apostles. The reality is, signs and wonders can produce one of two results – they may lead to belief, but they also lead to a hardening of the heart (e.g. Pharaoh hardens his heart on no less than seven occasions when he witness the signs and wonders of the plagues).
2. What seems miraculous to us is not always of God, for Satan is a deceiver and has the ability to do what seems miraculous to us. Jesus warns about this in Matthew 24:24 when He tells us that false christs and false prophets are able to perform signs and wonders (Note too that He does not correct the Pharisees theology in Matthew 12 by stating that the devil cannot perform miracles). However, with Jesus, there are no potions, lotions, magic tricks, smoke, or mirrors. Rather they are often done with just the power of His word without Him touching anything. Consider the miracles that we have seen already in John (2:1-12; 4:43-56; 5:1-18). Not to forget the many other signs still to come in John and those we read of in the other gospels.



QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION OR STUDY

1. Why does Jesus perform signs and wonders (miracles)? Why did miracles continue in the early church in the book of Acts?
2. We learn in Matthew 24:24 that false christs and false prophets can also perform miracles? What should we respond when we hear or read of apparent miracles today?



THE WITNESS OF THE FATHER (VV37-38)

The third witness is God the Father. Jesus does not specify what he means here regarding how the Father bore witness about Jesus. Some commentators suggest that He is referring to the Father's testimony at His baptism – the voice from heaven that declared, *"This is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased"* (Mat. 3:17; cp. Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22). However, their arguments are not very convincing because of what Jesus states about the people before Him in the rest of the verse, *"His voice you have never heard, his form you have never seen"*, meaning, they have not heard His literal voice nor seen His literal form.

A better understanding, based on the entire context, is that the Father's testimony about Jesus encompasses all the other testimonies about Him. Note that Jesus uses the past tense of the verb, implying that this is testimony that is already complete (cp. Heb. 1:1; Rom. 1:19-22). It is the Father who sent John the Baptist to prepare the way (cf. vv33-35), it is the Father who shows and enables Jesus to perform the signs and wonders (cf. Vv17-30, 36), it is the Father who has revealed everything about the Messiah in the Scriptures (cf. vv39-44 below), and is the one who gave Moses the Law that they so diligently study (cf. vv45-47 below). In other words, the Father has testified about the Son since the beginning, revealing Him to the world in many ways, until eventually revealing Him in person (cp. Heb. 1:1-2).

As Morris explains:

"Their ignorance is threefold: (i) They have never heard God's voice. Moses heard that voice (Exod. 33:11), but they are no true followers of Moses, otherwise they would have heard God's voice in Jesus (3:34; 17:8). (ii) They have never seen God's form. Israel saw that form (Gen. 32:30-31), but they are no true Israelites. Were they, they would have seen God in Jesus (14:9). (iii) They do not have God's word abiding in them. The Psalmist laid up God's word in his heart (Ps. 119:11), but they do not share his religious experience. Had they done so they would have received that word from Jesus (17:14)".⁹²

All this evidence has been in front of the Jews for thousands of years, and is even now in the person of Christ, yet they remain wilfully ignorant. Instead, the Jewish religious leaders judge Jesus as if they are the only ones who can speak for God. Jesus' charge against them is how can they do so when they have never heard God's voice nor seen Him – whether physically or spiritually. They have no basis to make such judgements.

92 Morris, Leon. 1995. *The Gospel According to John*. The New International Commentary on the New Testament. Revised edition. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, p291.

Furthermore, they do not have God's Word abiding in them. Without God's Word, they are not in a position to make such judgements because they cannot read the signs spoken of in Scripture that point to Jesus as the Messiah, nor recognise God's hand in the signs Jesus performs. This is ironic considering they are the self-professed keepers and teachers of God's law (Jesus will say more about the Scriptures when He appeals to His next witness)..

What was true for the Jews then is still true today. There are many in the modern church who claim to speak for God and try to convince us that they are true to His Word. However, when you test the spirits (cf. 1Jo. 4:1), it becomes evident that they twist the Scriptures to justify their gospel, which Paul tells us, is no gospel at all (cf. Gal. 1:6-9). This is rejection of Jesus and is heresy, for the Jesus they preach is a different Jesus to the one of the Bible. Instead these are cults that distort the truth and draw people away from the one true God to chase myths (1Ti. 1:7; 2Ti. 4:4) that Paul commands us to avoid (1Ti. 4:7).

Examples of a Different Jesus in Cults



Mormonism: Jesus is son of *Elohim* and the spirit brother of *Lucifer*. He was once a human being but through good works he evolved spiritually to become a god. They teach that you can also become like him and get your own planet.

Jehovah's Witnesses: Jesus is a god, not the God. He is the archangel Michael and was the first creation of God..

Prosperity Gospel: Jesus is there to grant you health and prosperity. To them, Christians should not suffer at all – if we do, it is because we do not have enough faith.

Seventh-Day Adventism: Jesus Christ possessed a human nature that not only was weakened by sin, but had propensities toward sin itself. His nature was like that of Adam after the fall. Because of his success in overcoming sin, Jesus is primarily our example.

African Syncretism: Jesus is seen as an ancestor, but is not God Himself.



QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION OR STUDY

1. Jesus' greatest witness is the Father Himself. In what ways has this witness come and in what ways has it been rejected?
2. What other examples of a different Jesus do you know about that are taught in cults, or even within so-called Christian churches?



THE WITNESS OF THE SCRIPTURES (VV39-44)

The fourth witness Jesus puts forth is that of the Scriptures themselves. The Jews have the very Word of God in the Scriptures, but they do not really understand them. These Jewish scholars are devout men of the Word of God – highly intelligent men who know the Old Testament Scriptures so intimately that they know how many letters it contains. They scrutinise every sentence yet they remain strangers to the truth it contains.

These religious leaders are much like the generation during the time of Jeremiah who thought that no harm would come to them because the temple of God was located in their midst (cf. Jer. 7:4). The belief among the religious leaders, and subsequently among many common people too, is that salvation

comes from possessing the Word of God itself. Instead of seeing the Scriptures as God's revelation of Himself to His people and how He wants them to respond to Him, the Jews see it as a mystical book which brings life.

For example, one of Judaism's most respected and well-known Rabbis, Hillel the Elder (110 BC – AD 10), is reported to have stated:

“The more flesh the more worms; the more property the more worry; the more wives the more witchcraft, the more maidservants the more lewdness; the more slaves the more thievery. The more Torah the more life; the more study the more wisdom; the more advice the more understanding; the more charity the more peace. One who acquires a good name acquires it for himself; one who acquires words of Torah has acquired himself a share in the world to come”.⁹³

In short, they believe that they gain eternal life by studying the Scriptures. But the point Jesus makes in verses 39 and 40 is that the Scriptures themselves do not give life, but rather that they point to Him who is the giver of life. It is one thing to have the Word in their heads, it is another thing to have it in their hearts. Even the Bibles that we study today – which indeed we should and are commanded to study – are not mystical books and they will not magically save a person or change one's life simply by owning one. The only way that will happen is when one heeds the words and puts them into practice.



One of the dangers of studying at Bible college is that the Bible ends up becoming a text book. And as good and helpful as it is to study the Bible in the original languages and make careful analysis of the words and grammar, the danger is always there that one comes to know what the Bible says, but is not able to apply it. As Paul tells Timothy, the Bible is useful or “*profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness*”, but that does not happen by osmosis, it happens by applying what it teaches. This is why James tells us to be doers of the Word and not only hearers (cf. James 1:22) and why faith without works is dead faith (cf. 2:17).

This is why Jesus is very direct with them and tells them that the Scriptures bear witness of Him. The message of the Old Testament is Jesus Christ, but they fail to see it. They are diligent in their study of the Scriptures, but they neglect its message and the one it is about. Even within the modern church, there are many believers and churches that ignore the Old Testament. They claim that it is all about law and a God who is vengeful and full of wrath. Instead they prefer the so-called New Testament God who is full of love and grace. But you cannot have one without the other. Jesus is on every page of the Old Testament. All the law, prophets, and the writings, point to Him (cp. Luke 24:27).

Because of their neglect of understanding the Old Testament truths about the promised Messiah, they do not recognise Him when He is right before them. But there is something that we need to remember here and that this is not due to naïvety, but due to wilful ignorance. Note Jesus' comment in verse 40, they “*refuse*” to go to Jesus. This shows the intentionality of their unwillingness. An example of this is what happened when the wise men come to Herod in Matthew 2. When Herod consults the religious leaders

⁹³ <https://torah.org>

about the promised King of the Jews, they quote from the Old Testament prophecies about where He was to be born. But there is an interesting statement just before this, *“When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him”* (v3). Herod and all of Jerusalem are troubled by the coming of the promised Messiah, yet when they hear the truth, there is no change of heart. Jesus indictment of the people here is that they are unwilling to come to Him for life. They have all the information they need, but because Jesus does not meet their man-made ideas, they reject Him.

There are many who are the same today. They are unwilling to come to Jesus. Let this be a lesson that no matter how much information one may have about Jesus, no matter how much truth you may tell them – the reality is, knowledge is no guarantee that one will become a Christian. So even though people may tell you that if you can prove the existence of God or give them valid reasons as to why they should believe, the reality is, it will not make any difference whatsoever. You can run the best apologetics programme on the planet. You can run courses and invite non-believers to attend so that they can learn about Jesus. And as good as those things may be, they are no guarantee. Why not? Because of what we learned in John 3:3, *“Unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God”*.



QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION OR STUDY

1. What is the primary purpose of Scripture? What are some ways people misunderstand the purpose of Scripture?
2. How do people make an idol out of Scripture today? On the other hand, too often we let God’s Word go. Consider your life and how often you have let go of God’s Word or forgotten His promises. What were the consequences?

But there is more to the testimony of this fourth witness. In verses 41-44 Jesus points out that despite all their claims to godliness and piety, they actually have no interest in the things of God. He contrasts them to Himself by stating that He does not receive or seek glory from men, but they seek the glory of one another, leading to those who come in their own name receiving glory instead of God and putting pressure on others to conform to their way of thinking. This is very similar to the world today – man seeking fame and recognition from other people and people being put onto pedestals. We must never seek to be man pleasers, but rather God pleasers. For trying to please man is like being on a roller-coaster ride, a life of ups and downs as you seek to please one group of people, while offending others, only to do it the other way around later. Furthermore, man is inconsistent, and what one wants today is not what one wants next time. If we seek to please men, we will never be content. And this all happens because we seek the glory of one another and not God.

But what you need to bear in mind here is that in context, Jesus is not talking about standing up for God when the heat is turned up – when you are suffering persecution for your beliefs. Instead He is talking about your every day life and asks what or who is it that is most important in your life? This is very similar to what Joshua commands the nation of Israel in Joshua 24:15, *“choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in*

whose land you dwell". At the end of the day it all comes down to your desires. If you truly love God, you will desire the things of God, and you will want them in greater quantity the more you get to know Him.

The problem is, many Christians today are like those in the church in Ephesus in Revelation 2. Jesus tells the Apostle John to write to them, *"I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first"*. If you find that the things of God are starting to take a back seat in your life, then you may have lost your first love. If the things of this world draw you away from things like Sunday worship, Bible study, and other such things, then I encourage you to take stock of your life do what Jesus tells the church in Ephesus to do, *"Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first"* (Rev. 2:5a). Because if you do not, you run the risk of becoming like these Jews, and should that happen, Jesus will judge you accordingly (cf. Rev. 2:5b).

These Jews sought to *"receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God"* (John 5:44). We know that they do not learn their lesson, for history shows that Jesus' description of their attitude is fulfilled many times over. For example, Theudas and Judas of Galilee (Acts 5:36-37), a man named Barkochba that arose (AD 132-135) that Rabbi Akiba called "The Star of Jacob" in reference to Numbers 24:17, and many others since, including the more recent Lubavitcher Rebbe Menachem Mendel Schneerson (1902-1994) who claimed to be the Messiah, but died in New York City and remains in his grave.⁹⁴

But before we point fingers at these people we need to consider our own hearts and see how easy it is to act the same way, as there is always the danger of putting men on pedestals and idolising them. Sadly, many men have fallen off those pedestals, never to be reinstated. There is also the danger of looking at men on those pedestals and desiring to be on a pedestal of our own. We are just like these Pharisees when we do that. Therefore, we must be like the Bereans in Acts 17 who even compared the Apostle Paul's teachings to Scripture to make sure he was preaching the truth. They did not accept him only based on his reputation, but on his faithfulness to the truth.

So Jesus does not seek the praise of men but that of God. But these Jews are the opposite. They seek the praise of men and not God. Why? Because they miss the one whom the message of the Scriptures is all about. They pride themselves in their interpretation, yet their interpretation is wrong. So instead of them seeing the Scriptures testifying about the Messiah, they think it is all about them. They think that by keeping the Mosaic Law they will gain eternal life, and so they manipulate the Law to the point that they deceive themselves into believing that they are keeping it (cp. Mat. 19:16-22). Ironically, this thinking is what eventually condemns them with the fifth and final witness that Jesus appeals to.



QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION OR STUDY

1. Are you a man-pleaser, or are you a God-pleaser? Similarly, are you trying make others please you instead of pleasing God? Discuss.

2. In verses 40-47 Jesus gives four reasons why some people do not find God when they read the Word. What are they?
3. Discuss, who or what has greater authority, Jesus or the Scriptures?



THE WITNESS OF MOSES (VV45-47)

Here Jesus exposes their false hope with an ironic and unexpected twist. The Jews pride themselves on their knowledge of the Law and their connection with the lawgiver, Moses. For the Jews, there is no higher earthly authority than Moses. He was the great law-giver, and because they so highly value the law, they are sure that at least Moses will be on their side at Judgment Day. No matter who else might be against them before God, they could rely on Moses.

However, the truth of the matter is that despite their claims they do not believe or follow what he wrote concerning the Messiah who is seen throughout the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Bible that Moses wrote – Genesis through Deuteronomy). Jesus does not refer to any specific passage (e.g. Gen. 3:15; 22:18; 49:10; Num. 24:17; Deut. 18:15) or to any specific types (e.g. the Passover, the manna, the rock, the offerings, or the priesthood). He simply states that all of Moses' writings, and indeed the whole Old Testament, point to Him.

But now Moses is their accuser, not the Father or Jesus (cf. 3:17). It is interesting that in the Greek this is in the present tense as if Moses himself is standing before them as a witness. Although the Jews think that they follow Moses, they misunderstand what Moses has to say about the Messiah. The very writings they say they believe actually condemn them. And if they do not believe Moses' writings in their entirety, how can they believe what Jesus tells them? In reality, they only believe what they want to believe and what fits into the religious system that they themselves created.

Nothing has changed in this regard. There are many Christians who "cherry-pick" certain passages and doctrines and choose to believe only what they agree with. One doctrine in particular is that of God's sovereignty in election versus free will. They cite passages that speak of man choosing God, while ignoring those that speak of God's sovereign choice. Although this doctrine is hard to comprehend, the reality is, both are true – God chose those whom He would save before the foundation of the world, meanwhile, man is to respond to Him in repentance and faith. This is what is known as an antinomy – a situation where two statements or beliefs that are both true or reasonable seem, yet seem to contradict each other.⁹⁵

But no matter how hard a doctrine is to understand, and regardless of whether we agree with it or not, we cannot pick-and-choose what we believe from the Bible. As Paul tells us, "*All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work*" (2Ti. 3:16-17). All Scripture, not just the parts we like. To accept some and ignore the rest, is to be just like these Pharisees, who even today,

95 For a better understanding of God's sovereignty read A.W. Pink's book, *The Sovereignty of God*, available as a free download from <https://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/sdg/pink/TheSovereigntyofGodPink.pdf>.

do not read or study Isaiah 53, for the leaders know that if they do, Jews will see Jesus as the fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecy.⁹⁶

Examples of Jesus in the Pentateuch



Gen. 3:15 – The seed of the woman that will crush the serpent's head.

Gen. 12:3; 22:18 – The seed of Abraham and Isaac through whom all the nations of the earth will be blessed.

Num. 24:17 – The star out of Jacob and the Sceptre who would rise out of Israel who will never cease to reign over His people.

Deu. 18 – The great prophet like Moses who will speak in God's name, and whoever would not listen will be judged by God.

Exo. and Lev. – The many typologies, such as the Passover lamb and the Levitical sacrifices that all look forward to Jesus' final sacrifice for sin.



QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION OR STUDY

1. If someone asked you what it means that Moses wrote about Jesus, how would you answer? How have we seen the truth of this in our study of John so far?



THE PURPOSE FOR CALLING WITNESSES (V34)

One final question needs to be asked of the text, and that is, why does Jesus appeal to these five witnesses. The text provides two answers. The first we have already covered in the introduction to this study, the Jewish custom and law that requires two or three witnesses to corroborate a claim. The second, and more significant reason is provided in verse 34, "*I say these things so that you may be saved*". Jesus' desire, and indeed the Apostle John's too (cf. 20:30-31), is the salvation of the hearers. There are no selfish motives here. Jesus is not trying to defend His reputation, in fact, when Jesus became a man He made Himself of no reputation (an alternative translation of Phi. 2:7) and humbled Himself to as low as He can possibly go – death on a cross.

This should cause you to consider your own motives when you talk about Christ, and not only in evangelistic contexts. I often hear people talk about Jesus and their faith in ways that are more about showing off or bragging than it is about pointing to Jesus. They talk about how good or bad they are as Christians in a manner that says "Look at me", "Look at how good I am doing", or "Woe is me, please pray for me. Put all your attention on me and my needs and feelings". But Jesus does neither of these things ever in His life on earth, and indeed even now, as we learned when looking at verse 23, Jesus deflects all the honour He receives to the Father (cf. Phi. 2:11). Our conversations about Christ and faith should always be directed towards God and must be for the sake of the Gospel, so that those who hear may be saved.

So when you enter into conversations and people start to attack you or question you about your faith, do not answer in a way to just win the argument or prove your point, but do so in a way that leads them to Christ. Rather let your conversations be like those of the Apostle Paul:

⁹⁶ Watch https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cGz9BVJ_k6s to see the effect of Isaiah 53 being read and explained to Jews today.

“And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God” (1Co. 2:1-5).

So in conclusion, the whole point of Jesus presenting these five witnesses comes down to this; there is adequate testimony to who Jesus is, therefore, no one has an excuse not to believe. It is not for the lack of evidence. It is because of the lack of will.

As R. Kent Hughes points out in his commentary:

“Finding the truth is as much a matter of the heart as it is of the mind. A man may say, ‘I’ve read the Bible and I want to believe it, but I just can’t.’ But further conversation reveals he is having an affair or is short-changing his boss or is fudging on his income tax return. He cannot believe when he is in that state. Nor can the woman who comes and says, ‘I’ve been reading the Bible for years and I cannot believe it,’ but she has an unforgiving spirit. The Lord’s Prayer says we are to forgive as we have been forgiven and that an unforgiving person is an unforgiven person. So when we come to the Scriptures, there must be a yielding of our lives, a focus not on self but on God. Then we will be able to hear what the Scriptures have to say to us”.⁹⁷



QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION OR STUDY

1. If you were brought to trial on the charge of being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you? Would your works give adequate witness? Would your words give adequate witness? Are you an adequate witness to a living, real relationship with Jesus Christ? Discuss.

97 Hughes, R. Kent. 1999. *John: That You May Believe*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, p173.