# John 5:31-47 – The Testimony of Christ

Imagine that you are the judge in a court case. Joe has been accused of stealing a TV from the local store where he works, but for some reason the video cameras did not work at the time the crime was supposed to take place. After presenting the evidence, which is all circumstantial, the prosecution attorney calls Joe’s coworker Bill to testify. Bill tells of how Joe has often talked about how easy it would be to still from the store and admired that specific model of TV. He tells about how the day before the theft Joe complained about his TV not working. Sally is then called and tells of seeing Joe carrying a large box to his car in the alley behind the store on the day the TV was stolen. She also shares how the day after the theft he went by Joe’s house and saw the same model of TV playing in Joe’s living room.

When the defense gets it’s turn, they don’t bother to present any evidence, but just confidently call Joe as his own defense witness. Joe testifies, “I didn’t steal it. I’m not the kind of person who steals stuff and I don’t even like TV.” What do you think would be the outcome of the trial? Will Joe be convicted or found innocent?

Obviously the testimony that Joe gives about himself is not likely to be believed as much as what people say about him. Joe has motive to lie in order to protect himself from going to jail. What we say about ourselves is generally dismissed as bragging or self-promotion. Even when it is true, people tend to mock those who make claims about themselves. Muhammed Ali was arguably the greatest boxer of all times, but he was also known for having an outrageous ego. As you watch this clip, think about whether his attitude makes you admire him or dislike him. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J9CeC3yrcG4>. While, arguably Ali was the greatest boxer alive at the time, his attitude was offensive.

Ironically, many people want to deny Jesus being God because He never said, “I am God.” As we saw last week, in claiming God as His Father, He was making Himself equal to God. Jesus regularly made statements such as, “Before Abraham was, I am.” (John 8:58) that were proclamations of His divinity, but their human nature led them to be upset instead of examining the possibility that his claims were valid. But, unlike Shirley MacLaine, He truly never said, “I am God.”

Rather than make the direct claim, Jesus made indirect claims, forcing people to think about what He said, even if they later disagreed. Jesus also presented evidence that He is God through his actions, wisdom and miracles. This week we see that Jesus also called on witnesses to testify about His divinity. Unlike Muhammed Ali, Jesus came as a humble servant and even though Jesus was the greatest, He addressed people in humility and love. As we look at John 8:31-47, we see Jesus acknowledges their concern, He calls John and the Father as His witnesses, He presents evidence of His works and of their hypocrisy and He presents Moses as an accuser against them.

## Concern Acknowledged John 5:31

**31** If I testify about myself, my testimony is not valid.

Two weeks ago, we saw that Jesus healed the man at the pool of Bethesda. Immediately they were upset because He was working on the Sabbath. Last week we saw that He pointed to God as His father and this made them even more upset. He could have legitimately asserted, “I am God.” He even had the power to force them to believe, but in his compassionate humility, He takes a different tactic. In verse 31, He recognizes that they say testimony about himself is not valid. Rather than disagree with them, He instead says, effectively, let’s look at this from a legal perspective and put my divinity on trial.

When someone questions your faith in Christ, will you try to shut them down, or will you acknowledge and try to address their concerns? Jesus choses to address our concerns.

## The Witness of John John 5:23-35

**32** There is another who testifies in my favor, and I know that his testimony about me is valid. **33** You have sent to John and he has testified to the truth. **34** Not that I accept human testimony; but I mention it that you may be saved. **35** John was a lamp that burned and gave light, and you chose for a time to enjoy his light.

Jesus’ first witness is John the Baptist. Jesus points out that not only did John testify about Him, but that at one point they even celebrated John’s ministry. When John was calling people to repent, it was fine with the Jewish leaders, they also wanted “those people” to repent. But then John went from preaching to meddling. He not only called on the people to repent, he also called on the religious leaders to repent. He then went further and pointed them toward Jesus.

When someone objects to following Jesus, can you connect them to things they do accept and use that to move the conversation. Maybe you point them to the love of a godly grandparent or the wisdom of a godly friend and then demonstrate how the love and wisdom came from their relationship with Jesus. Maybe you point them to the ways that women and minorities are treated far better in Christian influenced cultures than in cultures without Christian influence. If they don’t believe you, can you point them to a witness that they do or have respected.

If you help person to see believers they do respect, it may make them more willing to hear the gospel message.

## The Evidence of the Works John 5:36

**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 4, it was in exasperation that Jesus asserted that if they didn’t see miracles, they wouldn’t believe. Surely some of them thought to themselves that of course they would believe if they saw a miracle. Now Jesus points them to the miracles and shows that He has done things only God could do. But Jesus doesn’t just point to the miracles, he points to all the work that He is doing for the Father. Teaching, caring, laughing, and spending time with people are all ways He expresses the task that the Father has given Him.

You cannot do miracles, but you do have work that the Father has given you to finish. When you work well, you point people to Jesus, when you work poorly, you reflect Jesus in a corrupted light. As you work well in teaching, caring, laughing, and spending time with people, you give evidence that Jesus is working through you.

Legend says that Francis of Assisi said, “Share Jesus at all times, when necessary, use words.” I add, it is ALWAYS necessary to use words. The only way they know the difference between a Christian who is relying on Jesus for salvation and someone who is trying to accomplish the impossible task of earning their way to perfection is if you use words to tell them. That said, the only way that anyone will listen to your words is if you do the work that God has appointed for you.

## The Witness of the Father John 5:37-39

**37** And the Father who sent me has himself testified concerning me. You have never heard his voice nor seen his form, **38** nor does his word dwell in you, for you do not believe the one he sent. **39** You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me,

After introducing the testimony of John and the evidence of His works, Jesus now introduces the testimony of the Father. Jesus emphasizes both the divine nature of the Father and that the Father has spoken to them through scripture. He also points out that the very words of God in scripture testify about Jesus being God’s Son and the Messiah.

There is a technique that was frequently used in sharing the Gospel in the 1st century that is rarely preached these days. Jesus used it in Luke 24:27. Peter preached it in Acts 3. Phillip used it in Acts 8. I plan to preach such a sermon during this Christmas season. And Jesus is using it here. It is pointing to the very words of Old Testament scripture to prove that Jesus is God.

The words of the Old Testament are the Father’s sworn testimony that Jesus is God.

## The Evidence of Hypocrisy John 5:39-44

**39** You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, **40** yet you refuse to come to me to have life. **41** I do not accept praise from men, **42** but I know you. I know that you do not have the love of God in your hearts. **43** I have come in my Father’s name, and you do not accept me; but if someone else comes in his own name, you will accept him. **44** How can you believe if you accept praise from one another, yet make no effort to obtain the praise that comes from the only God?

Having established His case, Jesus now turns the tables around. From 1981-1993 Joseph Wapner presided over “the People’s Court.” The program returned in 1997 under the rulings of Ed Koch and Jerry Scheindlin, and continues to this day with Judge Marilyn Milian presiding. To my embarrassment, I actually enjoyed watching the show in the late 80s and early 90s. Normally you would see one person sue something over something petty and the judge would resolve the case. Occasionally, however, they would announce the case and say something like, “Mr. Jones is suing Mr. Smith for messing up his wedding and Mr. Smith is countersuing for Mr. Jones’ failure to pay the bill.” That is what is happening here.

The Jewish leaders accused Jesus of blasphemy for equating Himself with God. Jesus gives His defense by presenting evidence and witnesses and then turns to His countersuit. He doesn’t condemn them because they fail to understand the scriptures about Him, but because they refuse to believe the scriptures while believing the scriptures are the source of eternal life. He asserts that their failure to accept the scriptures proves that they have no love for God in their heart.

He then points out further hypocrisy on their part in saying that they refuse to accept Him when He was sent by God, but will choose to accept those who come in their own name and authority. Since Jesus’ death, no less than 20 people have gotten followers among the Jews by claiming to be the messiah, some of them had more Jewish followers in their lives than Jesus did while He was alive. Rather than pointing to scripture, they point to signs like, “the sea of Galilee is almost full,” as proof that this person is the messiah. They believe these false people who claim on their own behalf but deny the one that God has testified is the Messiah.

There is none so blind as he who refuses to see. The majority of the Jews will not believe until the prophecies of Isaiah 6:10-13, Romans 11:25-26 and Ezekiel 39:6-8 are fulfilled at which point God Himself will open their eyes.

## The Accusation of Moses John 5:45-47

**45** But do not think I will accuse you before the Father. Your accuser is Moses, on whom your hopes are set. **46** If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me. **47** But since you do not believe what he wrote, how are you going to believe what I say?

Even with the hypocritical response of the Jews, Jesus does not accuse them. Rather He says that Moses will accuse them because they refused to believe what he wrote about Jesus. I think it is significant that Jesus is not acting as the accuser. If you remember last week, we learned that the Father has given all judgment to the son. Even though an accusation from Jesus would be perfectly accurate and a judgment from Jesus would be perfectly accurate, Jesus avoids any appearance of conflict of interest by leaving the accusation to Moses.

Some people claim that they believe one part of the Bible, but not other parts. When people like Andy Stanley say we need to unhitch from the Old Testament, they deny that God inspired the entire Bible. When Paul wrote, “All scripture is God breathed” in 2 Timothy 3:16-17, the Old Testament was what he was referring to. When Peter wrote, the prophets spoke for God (2 Peter 1:19-21), it was the Old Testament prophets. When one starts denies the need for the Old Testament, other problems quickly follow. Andy Stanley also denies the Virgin Birth and implies that Jesus is a created being. Just as Jews face the accusation of Moses because they did not accept the Old Testament pointing to Jesus, people like Andy Stanley will be accused by the Apostles Paul and Peter because they deny that the Old Testament is scripture.

As for me and my house, our faith is in God and we recognize that the only way we know God is through His Word. We are not saved by Scripture, we know about our savior directly or indirectly through the words of Scripture as we come to understand it through the working of the Holy Spirit.

Some people refuse to accept Christ and are accused by Moses for not believing the Old Testament prophecies points to Jesus? Others are accused by Paul and Peter because you don’t believe the Old Testament is God’s Word and words. More tragically, some are accused by Moses, Peter and Paul, not because of denying their teachings, but because of neglecting to read and learn the Scriptures. God has spoken to you through His Word. Will you listen? God’s Testimony is in His word. His invitation to salvation is before you…will you accept His sacrifice to pay the penalty of sin on your behalf.

# John 5:31-47 – The Testimony of Christ

## Concern \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ John 5:31

When someone questions your faith in Christ, will you acknowledge and try to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ their concerns?

## The Witness of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ John 5:23-35

If they don’t believe you, can you point them to a witness that they do or have \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

If you help person to see believers they do respect, it may make them more willing to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ the gospel message.

## The Evidence of the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ John 5:36

You cannot do miracles, but you have \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ that the Father has given you

As you work well you give \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ that Jesus is working through you.

The only way anyone will \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ is if you do the work that God has appointed.

## The Witness of the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ John 5:37-39

The very words of God in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ testify about Jesus being God’s Son.

The very words of Old Testament scripture \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ that Jesus is God.

## The Evidence of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ John 5:39-44

He doesn’t condemn them because they \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to understand the scriptures about Him, but because they \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to believe

Their failure to accept proves that they have no \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for God.

There is none so \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ as he who refuses to see.

## The Accusation of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ John 5:45-47

Moses will accuse them because they refused to believe what he \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ about Jesus.

When Paul wrote, “All scripture is God breathed,” the \_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ was what he was referring to
 2 Timothy 3:16-17

 When Peter wrote, the prophets spoke for God, it was the \_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ prophets. 2 Peter 1:19-21

We are not saved \_\_\_\_ Scripture, we know our savior \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Scripture.

Some are accused because of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to read and learn the Scriptures.