



John 5:30-39

Four Witnesses That Jesus Is the Christ

30 "I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me.

31 " If I bear witness of Myself, My witness is not true.

32 "There is another who bears witness of Me, and I know that the witness which He witnesses of Me is true.

33 "You have sent to John, and he has borne witness to the truth.

34 "Yet I do not receive testimony from man, but I say these things that you may be saved.

35 "He was the burning and shining lamp, and you were willing for a time to rejoice in his light.

36 "But I have a greater witness than John's; for the works which the Father has given Me to finish -- the very works that I do -- bear witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me.

37 "And the Father Himself, who sent Me, has testified of Me. You have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His form.

38 "But you do not have His word abiding in you, because whom He sent, Him you do not believe.

39 "You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me.

It is not necessarily a bad thing to want evidence before you come to a conclusion about something. For instance, when someone is accused of a crime we don't simply read the charges and then have the judge flip a coin, "*heads you're guilty, tails you're innocent.*" No, we expect evidence from which we can come to a just conclusion to be presented. Well, that's the way it should work, but the fact is that sometimes the members of a jury will have a bias for or against the accused that is so profound, that no amount of evidence can overcome it.

You'll recall that the context for the words of Jesus that we just read is in one sense a trial. Jesus is defending Himself before the Jews who are angry that He healed a man on the Sabbath. He has told them that this was a necessary work, and he has also told them that He is the Messiah, and the Son of God. Now he is going to present them with evidence that what He has said is true. But that evidence in and of itself will not make them believe, because as we shall see next week their hearts are hopelessly inclined against him. Their spiritually dead condition makes it impossible for them to believe His testimony.

Of course it isn't only the majority of Jews in Christ's day who have suffered from this problem. For instance Anti-Theist Richard Dawkins loudly proclaims in his book *The God Delusion* and his ongoing world tour that he doesn't believe in God or the Gospel because of a lack of evidence, in fact in the book he quotes approvingly Bertrand Russell's famous answer to a reporter who asked what he would

say if he died and found himself confronted by an angry God who demanded to know why he had not believed. Russell said his reply would be “*Not enough evidence, God, not enough evidence*”.

But its not a lack of evidence out here for as Paul says “what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them”, it’s a problem of bias in here, and a suppressing of the truth in unrighteousness. As JC Ryle put it: “*unbelief does not arise so much from lack of evidence, as from lack of will to believe.*”

We can prove the fact that it wasn’t a lack of evidence them and other men from believing that Jesus is the Christ simply by listening to Jesus’s defense:

But before we get to Jesus’ evidence, listen to his opening statement in verse 30, because it frames everything else Jesus is going to say. Jesus points out that he is not here working by himself or doing his own will, but rather He was sent by His Father to carry out His Father’s will and that to the very end. That is why Jesus prayed in the garden to the father, *nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done.*”

Once again, Jesus is telling them, “*look you view my words as blasphemous because you think of me as just a man, and indeed if I was just a man they would be, but I am in fact the Messiah, and I and the Father are one. I am not here to work or speak as a man for myself, I am here as the Messiah and I speak and act for the Father.*”

Now because of that Jesus could, as the Son of God, and messenger of the Father who Sent Him, testify to himself, that is act as an unimpeachable witness in his own defense. But he does not do this, he follows the principle of Jewish Jurisprudence, set down in the law. ***Deut. 19:15 "One witness shall not rise against a man concerning any iniquity or any sin that he commits; by the mouth of two or three witnesses the matter shall be established."***

So Jesus will present not two or three but FOUR IMPECCABLE WITNESSES that prove that He is the Messiah, the Son of God. They are:

- 1) JOHN THE BAPTIST**
- 2) HIS MIRACLES**
- 3) GOD THE FATHER**
- 4) THE SCRIPTURES**

1) John the Baptist – Now Jesus doesn’t need the testimony of John the Baptist or any mere man to *prove* that He is the Christ or authenticate Him. That’s a very important principle. We should see that Dawkin’s idea that God needs man to prove that He exists is inherently ridiculous. Its similar to, but even dumber than saying, I can only exist if the ants in Tokyo believe in me. But Christ is willing to humble himself and mention this testimony, not because He needs it, but because His whole purpose in coming to earth, and His one great desire is that “you may be saved”.

So he says to them, you sent to John, he’s making reference to *John 1:19* which tells us that the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, “Who are you?” and he bore witness that He wasn’t the Christ but that Jesus was:

John 1:32 And John bore witness, saying, "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He remained upon Him.

33 "I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.'

34 "And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God."

35 Again, the next day, John stood with two of his disciples.

36 And looking at Jesus as He walked, he said, "Behold the Lamb of God!"

That was his witness, his prophecy to men. Now the standard of prophetic accuracy set forth in the bible is 100%, any less and he is not a true prophet. And to quote Mark 11:32 ***"all counted John to have been a prophet indeed."*** They believed John to be a prophet, but they didn't listen to him. ***and you were willing for a time to rejoice in his light*** – they rejoiced that after 400 years of silence, the space between the end of Malachi and the beginning of Matthew, God had seen fit to send them another prophet. But the problem was, while they heard him gladly they did not act on his words.

In that sense they treated John the Baptist in the same way so many unbelievers today treat Billy Graham. They speak well of him, they respect him, they regard him as someone who tells the truth and has a great deal of integrity, but they also totally ignore or reject the main message of His ministry – **the necessity of faith in Jesus Christ.**

It's like the people who admire the architecture of church buildings and yet who forget that in the end the purpose of a church building is not to look nice but to facilitate worship and the preaching of the gospel. If the gospel isn't in that place it's a whitewashed tomb, filled with dead men, and not a church. John's value was not that he was a prophet, but that he pointed men to Christ - ***"Behold the Lamb of God!"***

2) The Miracles – The superhuman works that Jesus did. These are overwhelmingly called "Signs" - σημεῖα because they pointed to the identity of Jesus they bore witness. Now they didn't dispute that he could do these things. For instance the fact that He had healed a man at the pool of Bethesda – something they didn't dispute – was what had precipitated this conversation.

The great SIGN or Work that Jesus did that validated his ministry was His resurrection:

Matt. 12:39 But He answered and said to them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.

40 "For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

But a sign by itself wasn't enough, Moses had warned that if a prophet did a sign but told them to believe in a false god, they shouldn't believe it, Pharaoh's magicians had done lying signs and wonders. The Jews knew that the Devil had power to do lying signs, and later the Pharisees will blasphemously allege that this is the power behind Christ's miracles.

So Jesus adds the testimony of 3) His Father in heaven - Again and again the Father had revealed the identity of the son, first by sending Prophets who spoke of Him, where he would be born, what he would do, that He would be as Isaiah said Immanuel *God With Us*. Then sending Angels, to declare his coming to Jonathan, to Elizabeth, to Mary, to Joseph, to the Shepherds, and then the Star, and the Wise Men. And then at his baptism:

Matt. 3:17 And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

If they had had the faith to believe God's promises, as Abraham and every faithful Jew had believed, then they would believe in the one that God in the fullness of time had sent, Jesus. But as it was they would not.

They would not even believe what the 4) The Scriptures revealed - Now when it came to the scriptures their diligence was unquestionable, they spent hours reading the word and even more time reading Rabbinic commentaries on the word. They were experts, in the scriptures, but had become like a men working in an observatory whose interest is in the fittings and never look through the telescope. Those men have forgotten that the purpose of the observatory is to look at the heavens. Many modern seminarians suffer from the same disease, their interest in the bible becomes entirely academic and theoretical it becomes a battleground for pet theories about individual books or verses, they slice it to pieces, and teach other men to do so forgetting that its actual purpose is to teach what man is to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of man. If at the end of the day, this book doesn't reveal Jesus to you and bring you to Him, then you are using them incorrectly, for he Himself said *these are they which testify of Me*. And unless you have seen him, you have not been saved, merely reading and studying the word as countless Rabbis still do, doesn't confer salvation, anymore than being very, very familiar with the telescope in the observatory teaches you about the planets.

So there is the evidence, common sense should have led them to listen to these witnesses. But in this case, it is rather like the OJ Simpson trial, the evidence is overwhelming, but what is missing is the will to convict.

Which brings me to my only Application: If you will not believe and confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead then do not fool yourself. Your problem is not a lack of evidence it is a lack of will. You do not want to believe. As Ryle said: "Great indeed is the obstinacy of infidelity. A cloud of witnesses testify that Jesus was the Son of God. To talk of lacking evidence is childish folly. The plain truth is, that the chief seat of unbelief is the heart. Many do not wish to believe, and therefore remain unbelievers."

Jesus said the same thing to the unbelievers in his own day:

John 10:24 Then the Jews surrounded Him and said to Him, "How long do You keep us in doubt? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly."

25 Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in My Father's name, they bear witness of Me.

26 "But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep, as I said to you.

Now Jesus knew infallibly whom the father had given to Him and whom He had not. He knew who was elect and who was reprobate among them. I do not, you do not. And you have no means of climbing into heaven and figuring it out. If you do not believe that simply means that you are like Paul and every other Christian today once was, unregenerate. It is true that you cannot believe without God doing his miraculous regenerating work in your heart, you must be born again. So what should you do if you feel you cannot believe, go to God right now and tell him your problem. Tell Him Lord your Son Jesus said of salvation, ***"The things which are impossible with men are possible with God."*** I cannot save myself, but you can. Save me O Lord.