

The Gospel of John

The Gospel of John

Lesson #53

The Journey

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of him who sent me. ³¹If I alone bear witness about myself, my testimony is not true. ³²There is another who bears witness about me, and I know that the testimony that he bears about me is true. ³³You sent to John, and he has borne witness to the truth. ³⁴Not that the testimony that I receive is from man, but I say these things so that you may be saved. ³⁵He was a burning and shining lamp, and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light. ³⁶But the testimony that I have is greater than that of John. For the works that the Father has given me to accomplish, the very works that I am doing, bear witness about me that the Father has sent me. ³⁷And the Father who sent me has himself borne witness about me. His voice you have never heard, his form you have never seen, ³⁸and you do not have his word abiding in you, for you do not believe the one whom he has sent. ³⁹You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, you: Moses, on whom you have set your hope. ⁴⁰For if you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me. ⁴¹But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words?"

• This is why we can take a leap forward today – the whole section is about the witnesses to who Jesus was.

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• John 5:30 "I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge, and my judgment is just, because I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me. ³¹If I alone bear witness about myself, my testimony is not true. ³²There is another who bears witness about me, and I know that the testimony that he bears about me is true. ³³You sent to John, and he has borne witness to the truth. ³⁴Not that the testimony that I receive is from man, but I say these things so that you may be saved. ³⁵He was a burning and shining lamp, and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light."

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- Throughout the chapter Jesus has been dropping some not-so-subtle hints that he was God.
- Remember John’s purpose in writing his gospel – he was going to document things that would show Jesus is the Christ.
- So true to his mission, that is what John has been documenting for his readers – things that would lead to faith in Jesus as God’s Son.

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Jesus is on trial, but it is not his first one and it won’t be his last one. He was really on trial everyday and everywhere he went. In a similar fashion we too are on trial in our neighborhoods, in our businesses, and even in our families. We don’t always get to defend ourselves because many times charges are brought against us in secret. We must accept this burden for what it is – the attacks against us are mostly for one reason. We are guilty by our association with Christ.

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- In this last section of John chapter 5 Jesus will cite the witnesses the court must accept because they are not himself.
 - John the Baptist
 - The works he had been doing (his miracles)
 - The witness of the Scripture
- How would you like to be able to call such witnesses for yourself should you ever be on trial for claiming to be godly?

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The Witness of John the Baptist

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The summation of John the Baptist’s witness happened when John introduced him to his readers. John the Baptist was being questioned by the Jews and called out, “I am a voice of one crying in the wilderness, ‘Make straight the way of the Lord,’” This was a clear reference to Isaiah’s prophecy that Messiah would be preceded by a Forerunner announcing his coming.

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- In verse 32 we read, “There is another who bears witness about me, and I know that the testimony that he bears about me is true”.
- He is speaking of John the Baptist – do you recall John’s words when Jesus comes to him to be baptized?
- “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (he is the one promised from of old)

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- John 1:15 (John bore witness about him, and cried out, “This was he of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.’)
- To add to his credibility as a witness John had already placed Jesus “before him”.
- “Before him” how - John was born six months before Jesus so it wasn’t their human ages. (The Preeminence of Christ in Colossians 1)

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- Without saying “Jesus is God”, John does effectively the same by placing Jesus above him spiritually.
- This is where John the Baptist knew Jesus was God, but still had to take it by faith – remember these words John sent his servants to ask Jesus?
- “Are You the One Who was to come, or should we look for another?”

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- What might seem like shaky words stemming from a weak faith are like our own struggles at times with what we believe.
- When we are in a theoretical, academic, no known problems in our lives, frame of mind – having great faith is easy to display.
- However, John the Baptist, the greatest human ever is in the dark dungeons of Jerusalem with rats and lots of time to reflect - and even he seems to have a bit of doubt.

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We've all been there – we have known the Lord for years and we know what the Bible says about those who belong to him. We remember what Job said – “though he slay me yet will I trust him”. When we have no threats to our lives or our well-being, we can boast of great faith, but when we are staring down a hard situation it is not uncommon at all to seek additional assurance from the Lord. It doesn't show that we don't trust him – it shows that we do!

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The Witness of Jesus' Works

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- And then we move to the witness of the works of Jesus – by their own words the Jews recognized the power of the miracles of Jesus.
- John 3:2 “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 7:31 Yet many of the people believed in him. They said, “When the Christ appears, will he do more signs than this man has done?”

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The "signs" John recorded.

- Changing water to wine – John 2
- Healing the Royal official's son – John 4
- Healing the man at the Bethesda pool – John 5
- Feeding the multitude – John 6
- Walking on water – John 6
- Healing a man blind from birth – John 9
- Raising Lazarus from the dead – John 11
- The Resurrection – John 20

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- The "sign" miracles Jesus did were recorded by John for a single purpose - **"that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."**
- If you follow the miracles of Jesus you might expect to find waves of faith and lots of converts, but if that is your expectation you will be disappointed.
- Just look at who was with him during Passion week.

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The miracles of Jesus speak for themselves – that is sort of what makes them miracles. The "signs and wonders" we see in John's gospel are all for a single eternal purpose; to validate his claims to deity.

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The Witness of Scripture

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- John 5:39 You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, 40 yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.
- To the Jews’ credit they were looking in the right place to find eternal life.
- No doubt through all their history the nations around them were seeking eternal life as well, but they always resorted to some sort of paganistic works.

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- The Jews were looking in the right place, but not with open hearts – they kept trying the same old tired methods of “keeping the law”.
- While they read the scriptures looking for a more exact way to obey, they were not looking for the obvious.
- And what was the obvious? “The seed of the woman who would crush the head of the serpent”. They should have been looking for the Seed of the Woman.

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- In the words of Aelfric, a tenth-century English theologian, “Happy is he, then, who reads the Scriptures, if he convert the words into actions.”
- While “faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God”, Bible reading, and even Bible study does not necessarily yield salvation.
- Luke 16:31 He said to him, “If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.”

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- And then there is this – “you refuse to come to me that you may have life”.
- This indictment is stinging – they knew the scriptures inside and out but were not willing to see the very fulfillment of the scriptures right in front of them.
- They had the truth but instead of doing something good with it they blatantly refused to believe.

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- Lots of us have people in our lives who have been exposed to the gospel through funerals, and other sporadic church events.
- Many of those have heard our own testimonies and have been the subject of our nearly endless prayers yet still they remain unmoved.
- Jeremiah 5:21 “Hear this, O foolish and senseless people, who have eyes, but see not, who have ears, but hear not”. (willful blindness)

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Few things are more frustrating than to have a friend or family member who is lost, is in imminent danger every moment of dropping into the fires of hell, but just does not seem to see where they are. I don't know that it applies to all the lost, but the Jews Jesus was addressing were unwilling to believe the testimonies of John, the miracles of Jesus, and the evidence of scripture. There is no amount of prayer or arguments that can move the one who doesn't want to be saved. It is a hard place to be.

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So, whether we are questioning our faith (John the Baptist) or we are frustrated over unconverted loved ones, there is a tendency to be fearful. Do not lose track of the basics like the more than 180 commands to "fear not". The enemy wants to distract us, and fear is one of his best tactics. No matter the obstacle in our own lives or the frustration of unbelieving friends and family, do not give in to fear. Push it out of your mind. I assure you it is a fiery dart thrown by the enemy and must be rejected or they will keep coming so that you cannot live a joyful Christian life.

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Questions?

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