

Mariemont Community Church

Practicing the Presence of Jesus The Evidence Invites a Verdict

Text: John 5: 31-47

Introduction:

Through the example of murder-minded opposition against Jesus, John reveals the "spirit of religion" and also prepares the Church for the persecution they would be facing. This story encourages our church and each of us as individuals to face our trials today with the same measured confidence that Jesus models. Last week we saw that this begins with a surrendered and intimate relationship with the Father, from which tremendous authority and confidence flow. We cannot worship Jesus in spirit and in truth unless we become His apprentices. This week, we see Jesus continue with his legal defense as he presents several witnesses in his case. It is John's authorial intent that we encounter Jesus and give our personal verdict to this evidence.

Today's Main Idea

Worship Jesus with your Mind. Following Jesus is a matter of the heart for sure, but Jesus wants it all - that includes giving Him glory through exercising our reason and intellect. Peter wrote in his first letter: 3:15 But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, NIV

The Testimony of Seven Witnesses

In verse 31, Jesus indicates that if all he had was his own testimony, it would not be valid. This conforms to Jewish legal process and common sense expectations of a Messiah. He goes on to say in verse 32 that there is another - this is clearly the Father based on the previous passage. That said, John's record reveals a total of seven witnesses to the truth of Jesus' claims: look carefully.

John The Baptist (v 33-35) - Even though he does not accept or require the approval of people, Jesus does remind his listeners that John was a light that pointed to Jesus as the Lamb of God and Messiah. Note 1:6 and Psalm 132:17. Those that believed John were saved, yet he was eventually rejected and killed.

Jesus' works (v. 36) - By works, Jesus refers to the authoritative teaching he gave and the miracles he performed for sure.....but also the prophetic words, the cross, resurrection, ascension, and the sending of the Holy Spirit.....in other words, his entire sin-free life - model apprentice, complete obedience.

The Father (v. 37-38) - The Father's witness is given indirectly - but it includes three stingers: you haven't heard his voice, you don't have his Word dwelling in you, all because you don't believe him.

The Scriptures (v. 39-40) - The Jews searched their bibles, and studied the Word. But they apparently did so without a motive to truly know God and His anointed One. They did not see the evidence and prophetic weight pointing to Jesus. They clung to "oral tradition" and did not see Jesus fulfilling all that was written.

The Spirit (v. 41-42) - Jesus, always full of the Spirit, will not accept human praise. He receives a divine discernment from the Holy Spirit that these people do not truly love God. The Spirit knows the human heart and when the love of God is absent. There is another agenda - the agenda of jealousy, hate, religion.

The false Messiahs they accepted (v. 43-44) - Jesus is probably referring to the rash of Messiahs that will come seeking followers at this time. Josephus reports (Antiquities) that there were several Messianic claimants before AD 70.

Moses (v. 44-47) - Especially in Deuteronomy 18:15, Moses promised a future Prophet for Israel. The focus of his spiritual leadership was to point Israel to the glory of God, and his promises and expectations, yet the readers of the day did not believe Moses enough to see Jesus. They are being held accountable for what they should know.....that Jesus is the Father's sent one!

All the pieces fit together - there is integrity and harmony in the testimony.

What is my verdict? How might I invite others to consider this evidence?

My friends (relationships):

My lifestyle (my works):

My love of the Father (my worship):

My passion to live God's Word:

My practice of the Spirit-filled life:

My acceptance of falsehood:

My response to spiritual leaders:

Do all the pieces of my life and lifestyle fit together - is there integrity and harmony in my testimony?

Practicing His Presence in Closing Prayer: Please pray alone or in small groups of 2-3 people:

1. Praise God for the way He has blessed us in the Imagine Journey so far;
2. Thank Him for the beautiful Chapel renovation and safety for all the workers;
3. Pray for the work and the safety of every worker as the Parish Center is renovated;
4. Pray for smooth transition to the Chapel and Dale Park School for the next 6 months;

5. Pray for provision of all the necessary funds to complete the project.

Resources for further study and growth:

1. The film "Expelled" featuring Ben Stein. A documentary about the growing intolerance for new ideas in academia - professors being fired for entertaining alternatives to Darwinism. A very calm and measured expose of the "religious fervor" with which "atheistic evolutionists" seek to deny others the freedom of inquiry. Also a great expose of the intellectually bankrupt evolutionist explanation for the origins of life!

2. Apologetics experts in town May 2-3: Hear many great speakers including Norman Geisler and William Lane Craig teach on defending our faith with sound reason and scientific rigor. Unshakeable Faith Conference being held in Cincinnati at Landmark Baptist - cost \$59. See <http://www.unshakeablefaith.org/>

3. The New Evidence That Demands A Verdict, by Josh McDowell.

4. The Creation Museum: Visit this high quality attraction that is just around the corner. See how the Genesis account is brought to life with engaging exhibits, film, and biblical teaching. For more information, visit <http://www.creationmuseum.org/>

5. Following the Master: Starts next week at 9 a.m. at the Junior High!