

The Purpose of The Scripture I

John 5:31-40

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Introduction: No one here has been to Antarctica but you are all pretty certain it exists...right? The same is true of China, Honduras and Congo. Never seen and yet believed in. Now...what about the American revolution, civil war and World War I? Did they happen? Has anyone here actually met the president of the United States? But...we are all pretty certain that the wars happened and the president actually exists. Why? It is because of testimony. There were people who have been to these places and they testify to their existence and character. What are historians and biographers exactly? They are witnesses to what they have seen and heard. They provide testimony as to the truth of events and places.

How are trials conducted without testimony? They cannot be. Witnesses are sworn in and their testimonies heard. The defense will seek to impugn the validity of the witnesses but if they cannot do so then their testimony will establish the truth of the stories, events and persons involved in the trial.

What about television, internet or print news? All testimony! We were not there to see or hear. We must either believe the testimony or reject it. The validity or credibility will depend on the witness and the observable facts. Upon their testimony we will believe or reject their accounts of events that occurred.

In our passage today, Jesus offers to the Jews testimony about Himself. It is not his testimony but the testimony of events and people in the present and in the past. Each one gives or will give convincing proof of the nature and character of Jesus Christ. Today we are offered the same witnesses through the inspired writings of John. Our response to them will be pivotal. We will believe them credible or we will not. We will trust their revelations or we will not. We will be led to faith in the Christ of the Scripture or we will not.

I want you to examine and consider that faith in anything that you have not personally seen is dependent upon the witnesses and your willingness to trust them. Nothing has changed over the centuries. God came into the world in the human person of Jesus Christ and offered testimony to prove His claim to be the Son of the Living God. I want you to consider that testimony and its credibility this morning.

No one should have to guess what I plan to talk about: Jesus offers testimony from the present...the day in which He lived and labored and He offers testimony from the past...where God had used men and orchestrated history to testify to the coming of His own Son into the world. In so doing He makes a startling claim about the Scriptures...the Bible...including the Old Testament. Knowledge of the Bible is not an

end in itself. It is the Word of God because God caused its existence and preservation. But....for a vastly different reason than many imagine.

John 5:31-40 ³¹ If I alone bear witness about myself, my testimony is not deemed true. ³² There is another who bears witness about me, and I know that the testimony that he bears about me is true. ³³ You sent to John, and he has borne witness to the truth. ³⁴ Not that the testimony that I receive is from man, but I say these things so that you may be saved. ³⁵ He was a burning and shining lamp, and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light. ³⁶ But 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. ³⁷ And the Father who sent me has himself borne witness about me. His voice you have never heard, his form you have never seen, ³⁸ and you do not have his word abiding in you, for you do not believe the one whom he has sent. 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.

TESTIMONY IN THE PRESENT! [31-36]

John 5:31-36 ³¹ If I alone bear witness about myself, my testimony is not deemed true. ³² There is another who bears witness about me, and I know that the testimony that he bears about me is true. ³³ You sent to John, and he has borne witness to the truth. ³⁴ Not that the testimony that I receive is from man, but I say these things so that you may be saved. ³⁵ He was a burning and shining lamp, and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light. ³⁶ But 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.

There is another who bears witness about me, and I know that the testimony that he bears about me is true. You sent to John, and he has borne witness to the truth: The NIV says “my testimony is not valid” and the KJV says “not true.” Jesus is speaking of the rules of testimony that have been part of law since the time of Moses. If I am accused of a crime, indicted and taken to trial....and if my lawyer puts me on the witness stand and I put my hand on the Bible and testify...”I can assure you that I did not do it!”...That testimony is not valid. This is what Jesus met. He is not saying that He is untruthful, but what everyone already knows....You cannot testify legitimately in this world on your own behalf.

There is another who bears witness about me, and I know that the testimony that he bears about me is true: This now begins to change the dynamic some. John the Baptist came on the scene preaching and was regarded as a prophet.

Matthew 3:1-6 In those days **John** the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, ² "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." ³ For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord; make his paths straight.'" ⁴ Now **John** wore a garment of

camel's hair and a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey.
⁵ Then Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region about the Jordan were going out to him,
⁶ and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

Jesus point here is pretty clear. He has been testified to by someone that the people had already embraced as a truth teller. A valid witness to things of God. It was non other than John himself who testified...

John 1:28-29 ²⁸ These things took place in Bethany across the Jordan, where John was baptizing. ²⁹ The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"

Not that the testimony that I receive is from man, but I say these things so that you may be saved: Now when people pick a teenage girl out of the general population and tell her that she is the most talented, beautiful and special young woman in all society...there is a good chance that she might actually start to believe it. In short order she becomes famous for "being famous" and we have watched those meteors tragically fall to earth again and again.

There are those who have always asserted that this is how Jesus became the Son of God. His followers got this idea that He was the Messiah. He went along because He was swept along in the enthusiasm of the time.

But Jesus has been speaking of His intimate and eternal connection with God the Father. Here is just some of what He said....

John 5:19-22 ¹⁹ So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise. ²⁰ For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing. And greater works than these will he show him, so that you may marvel. ²¹ For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will. ²² The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son,

He was a burning and shining lamp, and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light. But the testimony that I have is greater than that of John: But He realizes that humans require other testimony....other witnesses to what He says about Himself. So He begins by mentioning an approved and accepted prophet in His own day. He goes on here to explain something He is going to prove beyond a shadow of a doubt as we move through John. **HE DOES NOT NEED THE TESTIMONY OF MEN TO PROVE WHO HE IS!** Not to Himself or to others. He knows already who He is and where He came from and where He is going. He knows what He is able to do and what He has seen and what the future holds. He cites the testimony of John because John came to witness to the light of men....that they might be saved by Christ.

John 1:7 He came as a witness, to testify about the Light, so that all might believe through him.

But the testimony that I have is greater than that of John. For: Jesus changes the argument slightly here. Until now he has been discussing verbal testimony like we give to one another a hundred times a day. Examples: How was that movie? We testify...."It was great." What was the food in that restaurant like? We testify..."Very delicious!" How did you like your vacation in Europe? We testify...."It was exciting and restful!" BUT...our hearers have not seen that movie, eaten that food, or taken that vacation to Europe. They are relying on testimony and that can be shaky....at best!

Have you ever had someone recommend a movie you disliked or a restaurant that you hated? I was told then I went to Italy the first time that absolutely everyone there spoke perfect English.....What I was told did not match the testimony I heard. This is exactly where Jesus is going with this. He is saying....

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 I know that me just saying that I have come from the presence of God and that I am His Eternal Son and that everything the Father does the Son does as well....I know that just saying that does not offer proof to you. I know that even though you revere John as a prophet that it is still just testimony. What I am doing however and what I will do....that is entirely a different story! In other words:

**It is one thing to say I can do what the Father does....
...now I will do what only the Father does.**

The works which Jesus is doing , as everyone knew full well, were works that only God can do. The Jews were never able to deny the works. They focused on the Christ's Words and rejected His testimony while refusing to believe the testimony of God the Father on Christ's behalf.

John 10:31-38 ³¹ The Jews picked up stones again to stone Him. ³² Jesus answered them, "I showed you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you stoning Me?" ³³ The Jews answered Him, "For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy; and because You, being a man, make Yourself out *to be* God."..... ³⁶ do you say of Him, whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God ' ? ³⁷ "If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me; ³⁸ but if I do them, though you do not believe Me, believe the works, so that you may know and understand that the Father is in Me, and I in the Father."

This is what happens when the Scripture is kept separate in our minds from God Himself. "God speaks to us in this book, but we never really expect Him to actually show up in our lives." But God asserts that He is active in your life...but why should you believe Him?

Proverbs 16:9 In his heart a man plans his course, but the LORD determines his steps.

God says He does this, but for us it is bad luck, bad karma, bad government, bad investing, bad decisions on our part....our list is endless. Here is a perfect example of

how the Scripture exists to get you to think about God being alive in your world and life. If you want to buy a lottery ticket go ahead, but know this first hear what God says....

Proverbs 16:33 The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD.

Now if you are thinking, and I hope you are, that there is no way to know if the numbers on that dice are decided by the Lord or if He is actually ordering our steps through events in our lives, then you would be correct. You are tracking with Jesus' argument if you are thinking this. Jesus says that me just telling you does not make it so. He says of John's preaching....you say you believed John but him telling you something does not make it so.

So Jesus offers evidence that His testimony, the testimony of John and even the Scripture is true and reliable. There are certain things that only God does....but Jesus who says He is God.....is able to do them.

Jesus not only claims to be God as a human man, but is doing works which no mere man can do. Works that must be acknowledged to be works of God. In the simplest terms I know how....God is intervening in His own creation by becoming one of His own creatures and doing on the earth what only God can do. This is the testimony of Jesus day. It confirmed the Scripture of Jesus day because the Prophets, the Psalmists and all its writers spoke about the coming of Messiah, who would be God's own Son. They were so specific that that their cumulative testimony cannot be legitimately questioned by skeptics....but it is. AND this brings us to what Jesus had to say specifically about the Scripture as it relates to God!!

TESTIMONY FROM THE PAST! [37-40]

John 5:37-40 ³⁷ "And the Father who sent Me, He has testified of Me. You have neither heard His voice at any time nor seen His form. ³⁸ "You do not have His word abiding in you, for you do not believe Him whom He sent. ³⁹ "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me; ⁴⁰ and you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life.

The Father who sent Me, He has testified of Me: Jesus is about to give us God's purpose for testimony of any kind. This is, as we will very shortly see also God's view of the purpose of the written Scripture...the Bible. Any testimony, standing alone, even the testimony of the Father and even though it is infallible and absolutely true...is not sufficient for your life and salvation.

You have neither heard His voice at any time nor seen His form: The testimony must be heard and the witness must be seen. If the voice is not heard and the witness is not seen than the testimony is "second hand" and not useful to determine the truth of the matter.

Jesus is speaking to absolute experts in the Scripture. We are speaking of the Old Testament here because a single word of the New had not been penned when He spoke to the Jewish Scripture experts of His day.

You do not have His word abiding in you: “Abiding” means “remaining or being at home” in you. Jesus is saying, that although they know the Scripture front to back they do not know, have not heard and have never seen God. The Scripture for them is a book. They are living by a book and their best understanding of its moral and religious instructions. They revered the book but they did not use it to know, see or hear the God of the book. They wanted religion, ritual, order, control. They never wanted God in their lives, nations or churches.

Now you should say, at this point, “what evidence do you have that what Jesus just said is true?” This is what Jesus put forth as evidence. “**You do not believe Him whom He sent.**” Christ’s assertions and arguments are double edged. He says that after everything that God has said about me in the Scripture [that you say is God’s true Word] and after every fulfillment of those prophecies...and after the coming of John and His testimony and after my own coming and the astounding miracles and God like works I have done you will not believe me, trust me or accept me for who I am....Your God.

You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me: Now this is what I met by a double edged argument. Jesus is saying that the Scriptures testify or witness or point the finger or shine the spotlight on Him.

This is a purpose statement for the Scripture.... the reason God gave the Scripture. It is not a religious book. Its purpose is not to make you holy! It’s purpose is not even to save you! Jesus said “you think that in them you have eternal life.” You are wrong...Eternal life is not in the Scriptures. You cannot get something that precious, spiritual, other worldly and vital from a book. You will never get it through theology or knowing the entire list of Hebrew Kings or even the ten commandments. This is a bold and shocking statement. And it was made by Christ. I am just embellishing it a bit to shock you out of your own comfort zone.

You are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life: .Let me go further out onto the ice for a moment. Sound doctrine will not save you. You may believe that Christ died on the cross for your sins, was buried and then rose again on the third day, but that belief does not save you. It is Jesus that saves you! It is never about what you trust...it is about who you trust. The Bible scholars of Christ’s day believed many things about God and that was where they wanted to keep it. They did not want God meddling in their lives. They wanted Him to stay up in heaven and let them do what they wanted here on earth.

NOW....I am driving you now to the extreme edge of this cliff. I want you to see that The Bible is about Christ from beginning to end. It is not an end in itself. It is not to be worshiped...it does not need defending or protecting like some spend their lives doing. BUT....we are not saying that it is not true, vital, infallible and a guide. The other part of

Christ's argument is that Scripture is God's Testimony that He was going to send His own Son into the world to fully reveal Himself as the loving, merciful, compassionate and yet just God of Creation. The Word has power to do that and has done so for thousands of years. Every effort to discredit it and destroy it have failed. It has had the same effect on hundreds of generations, in every nation, tribe and language. It has not been changed, altered or corrupted...ONLY misused, abused and mishandled. It remains the true testimony of the True God about Himself. It is God's testimony that Jesus Christ, The Messiah and Savior of all men was coming, did come and has come into the world to do for us what only God could do for you. The Scripture confirms that Jesus is the Christ and Jesus confirmed by His conception, birth, life, miracles and resurrection that Scripture is true. Someone has said that....

"The idea of a Messiah is one that is found throughout the Hebrew Bible. There, the Messiah's "I.D." is given to us. Imagine looking up a friend by first locating his country. That would not be enough information, so you would need to ascertain his city, street, and specific number on that street. It would also help if you had a phone number and knew the time at which he would be home.

Similarly, the Bible tells us the "I.D." of the Messiah. His ethnic background, place of birth, time frame of his arrival and other identifying characteristics are given. These "credentials" enable us to identify the Messiah, and to recognize imposters.

What, then, are some of the credentials of the Messiah? Only a few can be listed below; there are many others. All of these passages were recognized by the early rabbis as referring to the Messiah:

Micah 5:2 But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days.

Genesis 49:10 The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him; and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.

Zechariah 9:9 Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

Psalm 22:7-18 ¹⁴ I am poured out like water, And all my bones are out of joint; My heart is like wax; It is melted within me. ¹⁵ My strength is dried up like a potsherd, And my tongue cleaves to my jaws; And You lay me in the dust of death. ¹⁶ For dogs have surrounded me; A band of evildoers has encompassed me; They pierced my hands and my feet. ¹⁷ I can count all my bones. They look, they stare at me; ¹⁸ They divide my garments among them, And for my clothing they cast lots.

CONCLUSION: I said at the beginning that here Jesus makes a startling claim about the Scripture. There are actually two claims. **The first** is that the Old Testament is a witness to the coming of Christ into the world. God superintended over it so that the testimony would be true and precise. Its accuracy about Jesus exceeds any possibility of coincidence.

The second claim is that knowledge of the Scriptures is not and was never intended to be an end in itself. The Scriptures, both Old and New are given to truthfully point you to Christ. It is not what you believe about Christ that saves you. It is actually the person of Jesus Christ who bore your sins thus paying your debt to God. It is the man Christ Jesus who lived a sinless life and then put your name on it and gifted it to you for all Eternity. It is not faith in a resurrection that will bring your dead body back to life it is Jesus who will do that.

Why is this so important to you? Because countless Christians in our day are living just like these men Jesus speaks to. They have a book and they have some doctrines and some morality and some judgments to pass, BUT they do not have what the Scripture was given to provide for them. Deep abiding love for Christ through the knowledge that He left heaven, became a man, suffered all of your same griefs and trials in this fallen world but without sinning....then traded places with you so that the judgment that should be yours fell on Him and the eternal life of joy that is His now can fall on you. This is faith in Christ. Not doctrine! Not performance! It is pure love and mercy and it is revealed in the Bible for those who wish to see it there.

God wants you to trust Christ to save you. He does not want you imperfect morality or religion. He actually wants you as you are. If you bring Him your sin He will trade you for His righteous life and standing before God. It is amazingly good news and it has always been in the Old Testament Scripture that Jesus referred to here.

Isaiah 53:3-12 ³ He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. ⁴ Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. ⁵ But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. ⁶ We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. ⁷ He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. ⁸ By oppression and judgment he was taken away. And who can speak of his descendants? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was stricken. ⁹ He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth. ¹⁰ Yet it was the LORD's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the LORD makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand. ¹¹ After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities. ¹² Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.