

# John 5:31-47

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Preacher: Nathan Raynor

[ 0 : 00 ] Amen. Please take your copy of God's Word and join me in John chapter 5. John chapter 5, our text for today is verses 31 through 47.

! Before reading our text, I want to give you the simple outline for our study this morning, and I'll link the introduction. I think it'll take us a little time to get through.

So, first the outline. We will see in these verses, this closing portion of chapter 5, witnesses to Jesus. There are a number of them. Witnesses to Jesus the Christ and rejection of Jesus the Christ. The Scriptures contain within them a redemptive storyline. It is a magnificent story of a loving God saving an undeserving people for the glory of His name. Tragically, part of this narrative arc includes rebellion against God's loving kindness, particularly on the part of Israel. We trace this all throughout the Old Testament. The prophet Isaiah pictures Israel's unfaithfulness in a parable in Isaiah chapter 5, verses 1 through 7.

Let me sing for my beloved my love song concerning his vineyard. My beloved had a vineyard on a very fertile hill. He dug it and cleared it of stones and planted it with choice vines. He built a watchtower in the midst of it and hewed out a wine vat in it, and he looked for it to yield grapes, but it yielded wild grapes.

And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge between me and my vineyard. What more was there to do for my vineyard that I have not done in it? When I looked for it to yield grapes, why did it yield wild grapes?

[ 2 : 07 ] And now I tell you that what I will do to my vineyard, I will remove its hedge and it shall be devoured. I will break down its wall and it shall be trampled down. I will make it a waste. It shall not be pruned or hoed and briars and thorns shall grow up. I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are his pleasant planting. And he looked for justice, but behold, bloodshed. For righteousness, but behold, an outcry. Now although Israel was guilty of persistently forsaking God, he remained and remains loving toward them. He has yet to cease his kindness to ethnic Israel.

See Romans 9 through 11. And he is broadening his kindness to all peoples, spiritual Israel. Paul writes in Romans chapter 9, verse 6 and following after expressing great grief for those Jewish people that rejected Jesus as the Christ. But it is not as though the word of God has failed, for not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel. And not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring, but through Isaac shall your offspring be named. This means it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring. So those who are not ethnically Jewish being grafted into Israel by God's grace.

God expresses his great love in redeeming wayward, undeserving rebels. This is so beautifully pictured in the life of the prophet Hosea, who was instructed by God to marry a woman named Gomer, who is unfaithful.

He's told this at the outset. She will not be faithful to you. She has children by other men. She abandons Hosea and is eventually an indentured slave. Hosea and Gomer's lives are pageantry meant to teach us about God's faithfulness in juxtaposition, in comparison to unfaithfulness. The story of Hosea and Gomer find its climax in chapter 3 of Hosea. This is the entirety of that chapter.

[ 4 : 50 ] And the Lord said to me, Go again. Love a woman who is loved by another man and is an adulteress, even as the Lord loves the children of Israel, though they turn to other gods and love cakes of raisins. So I bought her for 15 shekels of silver and a homer and a lethic of barley. This was a massive sum. And I said to her, You must dwell as mine for many days. You shall not play the whore or belong to another man.

So will I also be to you. For the children of Israel shall dwell many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or pillar, without ephod or household gods. Afterward, the children of Israel shall return and seek the Lord their God and David their king. And they shall come in fear to the Lord and to his goodness in the latter days.

It is to a rebellious, Christ-rejecting people that Jesus ministered and John writes to.

Many of us have received Jesus, the Christ. We have believed in his name for the salvation of our souls.

Praise God for his great mercy to us. Justified by grace alone, through faith alone, in Jesus Christ alone.

[ 6 : 21 ] Declared righteous before God because we are found in Christ. We are one with him.

What a glorious reality. Be counted this day among those who have and are in Christ. Who have recognized him as the anointed one.

Do not find yourself among those who reject Jesus, the Christ. Whose perfect life, sacrificial death, and third day resurrection grants eternal life to all who will believe in him. That's what this text sets before us today, as many of John's writings do.

So John chapter 5, verse 31 through 47. Join me in prayer before I read it. Father God, thank you for your word this morning. It's such a privilege to be together and to be able to open up this ancient text and have it speak to us today.

We recognize that it was written for your glory and for our good. And we know that we need your help to rightly understand it. Father, we want to believe its promises and we want to obey its commands.

And we want to have affection for you, its author. Would you work this in us this day as we study together? And we pray this for the glory of Christ. Amen.

[ 7 : 54 ] Begin reading in verse 31. Jesus says, He says,

And it is they that bear witness about me, that you refuse to come to me, that you may have life. I do not receive glory from people, but I know that you do not have the love of God within you.

I have come in my Father's name and you do not receive me. If another comes in his own name, you will receive him. How can you believe when you receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?

Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father. There is one who accuses you, Moses, on whom you have set your hope. For if you believed Moses, you would believe me.

For he wrote of me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words? Now, yesterday, at our men's morning meeting, I was made fun of for pointing out the literary structures of John, and it got a real good laugh.

[ 9 : 54 ] So, I'm not going to talk about chiasmic structure this morning. I'm kidding. I am talking about chiasmic structure this morning. You all should know that my skin is thick, especially when it comes to teaching you something that I am confident is good for your souls.

Now, I should have done so from the beginning to help you see the structure more clearly. So, this morning, I have included a short outline in your bulletin to just make this point further.

So, you have it there in front of you. Which, by the way, the weird lines across it are no feature of the bulletin, but a goofy thing the copier is doing that I didn't have time to fix yesterday. So, ignore the line struck through the bulletin, but notice, under your sermon notes section, you've heard me talk in this term, chiasmic structure.

So, now you can see the half of the X there. It's from the Greek letter chi for X. And how the beginning section corresponds with the last section.

So, you see a true testimony that comes from John the Baptist, and then a true accusation that comes from Moses. A, and then A prime.

[ 11 : 10 ] Then notice B, verses 34 and 35. A testimony not received from man, and then glory not received from man, in verses 41 and 44.

I hope this helps you see the way that Jesus is speaking and John is recording. Why does it feel so disjointed to us as we read it through? It's a literary structure, and it's meant to draw our attention somewhere.

So, then you go on, right? You've got the work or the works that Jesus is doing, and the Father testifying in verses 36 and the first part of 37.

And then in verses 39 and 40, the Scriptures testifying. The central part of this text, the center of the chiasm, is the last part of verse 37 and verse 38.

So, what do we do with that?

[12:22] We pick the lens, and we look at the rest of the text, right? And again, you wouldn't have to see this to understand this. I'm not suggesting that I'm giving to you some special code, right?

That you can lay this filter on top of any text, and suddenly it's going to just be totally unlocked for you. I think if you're being faithful to the text, and you're giving it a fair reading, you're going to pick up that there's testimony being given, and there's rejection happening.

But this helps us to see that what's being communicated is particularly this rejection. To really note what's going on in the center of this very text.

So, with that in mind, first point of the outline for today is, number one, witnesses to Jesus, the Christ.

We see a number of them in this text. You know, you remember, right, for Christ, for Jesus to be the Christ, he's the anointed one. You see also the Hebrew word Messiah, the one who's promised in the Old Testament, who's going to come and take away the sin of the world, who's going to liberate God's people.

[13:31] Lots of misunderstandings about what that meant. But the people that are being talked to here in this text had some understanding that there was one who was going to come.

One who was going to reign in the line of David forever. And they were sensitive to this. They're highly concerned about who this Jesus is.

He's not the first person who would come and said he was the Christ. There had been rebellions led against Rome that were brutally squashed in the name of the Christ.

They're rightly concerned. Is this Jesus actually the Messiah? And they just fail to see that he actually is.

You may remember earlier in the chapter, chapter 5 and verse 18, we see the record. This was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him. Because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, he had healed a man, a lame man, at the pool of Bethesda on the Sabbath.

[14:40] But he was even calling God his own father, making himself equal with God. If Jesus wasn't God, then this would have been a great blasphemy.

They would have been right to seek justice in the matter. But he is. In the verses that follow, verse 18 of chapter 5, John records Jesus doubling down on the fact that he is God.

Never shrinks back from this reality. And then we arrive at verse 31, verse 31, where he says, if I alone bear witness about myself, my testimony is not true.

Is he saying that as God, incarnate God, that everything he says isn't true? Of course not. But for the sake of people's salvation, he's saying, look, on your terms, if a man claims something about himself, he better bring some witnesses along.

And then we get this laid out for us, these varied witnesses to Jesus, the Christ. First we see John the Baptist, verses 32 through 35.

[15:55] There's a bit of debate in verse 32 whether or not the one who bears witness about him, if he's referring to John, or if he's referring to God. It's not terribly important.

I lean off in the John the Baptist direction. But some would say that Jesus is saying, I know that the testimony he bears about me is true, is referring to the testimony he'll later refer to concerning God the Father.

But either way, there's another one who's giving testimony. And certainly in verse 33, he says, you sent to John, and he has borne witness to the truth.

Now I'm pretty sure when he says, you sent to John, he's referring to something that we have recorded for us back in John chapter 1. So if you want to turn back a couple of pages and look at verse 19 of John chapter 1.

There John records of John the Baptist, different Johns, and this is the testimony of John. This is verse 19. When the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, who are you?

[17:05] That's the thing I believe he's referring to. Right? You sent to John. Right there we see in verse 19 of chapter 1. The Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, who are you?

John confessed and did not deny, but confessed, I am not the Christ. And they asked him, what then? Are you Elijah? He said, I am not. Are you the prophet?

And he answered, no. So they said to him, who are you? We need to give an answer to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself? He said, I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness.

Make straight the way of the Lord, as the prophet Isaiah said. Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. They asked him, then why are you baptizing, if you are neither the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?

John answered them, I baptize with water, but among you stands one you do not know. Even he who comes after me, the strap of whose sandals, I am not worthy to untie.

[18:07] John the Baptist's witness to Christ was that he was the forerunner of Christ. He's preparing the way for the Messiah. Later in the chapter, he sees Jesus and he says, behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

Jesus goes on in verse 34 of chapter 5, not that the testimony that I received is from man, but I say these things so that you may be saved.

They're such frail, mental beings. There was an earthly witness, someone who came, someone you marveled at who pointed to me as the Christ.

He was a burning and shining lamp and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light. Something was going on with this John the baptizer and you were willing to heed what he had to say for some time.

This is most likely a reference to Psalm 132. There we can read beginning in verse 11, the Lord swore to David a sure oath from which he will not turn back.

[19:27] One of the sons of your body I will set on your throne. If your sons keep my covenant and my testimonies that I shall teach them, their sons also forever shall sit on your throne.

For the Lord has chosen Zion. He has desired it for his dwelling place. This is my resting place forever. Here I will dwell for I have desired it.

I will abundantly bless her provisions. I will satisfy her poor with bread. Her priests I will clothe with salvation and her saints will shout for joy.

There I will make a horn to sprout for David. I have prepared a lamp for my anointed. I think that's the reference going on here. John the Baptist is the lamp of Psalm 132 and verse 17.

One meant to give light to the coming of the light of the world. So we see John the Baptist as a witness to Jesus the Christ.

[20:32] We also see Jesus' works. Every time that Jesus is performing a miracle, it's a miracle that's given to him by the Father to do, to testify to the fact that he is God.

That he exercises dominion over illness, over creation, over sin. Again and again and again it sets a stage for Jesus to be shown to be the Christ.

And again and again there's conflict over it. People miss it. They want the signs but they don't want the one performing the signs. And John's narrative is told in this way.

We see a miracle and then we see teaching and then we see a miracle and then we see teaching. And we're in that teaching portion now following that miraculous healing of the lame man at the pool of Bethesda.

Verse 36. He says, 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.

[21:41] I am from the Father. I am doing the works that the Father is doing. We read earlier in the chapter and this bears witness that I am God.

I am the Messiah. The Christ. Jesus' works bear witness. We also see witness to the Christ of the Father.

There in the beginning of verse 37. Jesus says, And the Father who sent me has himself borne witness about me.

Now, Jesus' baptism is referenced by John the Baptist in chapter 1. But the details of the event are not mentioned in John's Gospel. It is likely at the later date of this Gospel's writing that the details were so commonly known that the reference to it was merely enough.

But for our sake, listen to Matthew 3, verse 16 and 17. When Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water and behold, the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him.

[ 22 : 56 ] And behold, a voice from heaven said, I'm suggesting to you this is what he's referring to, right? Has himself borne witness about me.

A voice from heaven said, This is my beloved son with whom I am well pleased. Understood. This is the Christ. So the Father himself, God the Father has borne witness to God the Son. We also see, if we jump down a couple verses to verse 39, the Scriptures bear witness to Jesus as the Christ.

Here Jesus says, You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life. And it is they that bear witness about me.

He's going to reference the words of Moses later, being about him. Luke records the resurrected Jesus conversing with two doubting disciples as they travel to a place called Emmaus.

[ 24 : 05 ] You may be familiar. In Luke chapter 24 verse 25 and following, Jesus says to them, O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken.

Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory? They're terribly concerned that the one who said he was the Christ died.

And then verse 27 says, And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, that is to say, the Scripture of Jesus' day, Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

Every bit of the Bible, the entire text, points us to the person and work of Jesus Christ. The Scriptures bear witness to Jesus as the Christ.

And then lastly, the last witness is Moses, verses 45 and 46. Jesus says, Don't think I will accuse you to the Father? There is one who accuses you, Moses, on whom you have set your hope.

[ 25 : 17 ] Old covenant obedience to the law. This is not the place for hope. For if you believed Moses, you would believe me.

For he wrote of me. Moses was a forerunner of Christ who would come. So there's all this witness and that's the point that Jesus is making here.

You've had all the advantage laid before you. All of this testimony to who I am and yet he is rejected.

So let's look at that. The rejection of Jesus the Christ. Again, that central part of our chiasmic structure. The last part of verse 37 and verse 38.

Jesus says, His voice you have never heard. His form you have never seen and you do not have his word abiding in you. He's talking about God the Father. For you do not believe the one whom he has sent.

[ 26 : 17 ] the Christ. You do not believe him. There's this indictment issued. Jesus says to this Jewish audience rejecting him as the Christ and it's threefold.

The first, he says, His voice you have never heard. They are unlike Moses in this way.

Right? One of their patriarchs. are unlike Moses who heard God's voice. Right? Who met with him on the mountain. Exodus chapter 33 and verse 11.

Those who reject Jesus, the Christ, have never heard God's voice. Because Jesus speaks the words of God.

Earlier in our text, I read of you John chapter 5 in verse 18. The verse that follows at verse 19. Jesus says 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.

[ 27 : 21 ] For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise. And you could see in that what he speaks as well. But in case that's too vague, later in John's gospel in chapter 12 and verse 49, Jesus says, For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment.

What to say and what to speak. Jesus speaks the very words of God, and if we reject Jesus as the Christ, then we reject God himself.

So his voice you have never heard is the first point of the indictment. The second is his form you have never seen.

Unlike Jacob, another Jewish patriarch who wrestled with God and said in Genesis 32 and verse 30, there it says, So Jacob called the name of the place Peniel, saying, For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life has been delivered.

You don't know him because you're not accepting me. That's the second part of the indictment. The third part of it, and you do not have his word abiding!

[ 28 : 47 ] in you. Unlike, say, Joshua, another patriarch who was commanded, Joshua chapter 1 verse 8 and 9, This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it.

For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous, do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.

I'm going to pick up this idea of abiding later on in John's gospel, but it means to tarry along with, to travel in your going, you do not have God's word going with you because if you did, you would see me, the one that it testifies to.

The last part of verse 48 says, For you do not believe that you have not seen his form, you do not have his word abiding in you, and the evidence of that is that you are rejecting the one that he has sent.

after he talks about the scriptures and their diligent searching of it and trying to find eternal life in it, he says in verse 40, Yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.

[ 30 : 16 ] This book is a precious, precious book. We are just so abundantly blessed with Bible in our days.

the translations that we have, just pick one of the good translations and we are more favored amongst peoples to have such good access to the scripture.

And then we replete with them. We have all kinds of great translations and great tools to study. It's all so good and so precious, but guys, we miss it if we don't see Christ on its pages.

It's useless to us if we don't take hold of Jesus, the Christ. He says in verse 43, I have come in my Father's name and you do not receive me.

If another comes in his own name, you will receive him. And it's like he's saying, what's wrong with you? God has sent me, see me, and receive me.

[ 31 : 20 ] So let's think through some applications as we consider this text in closing. First, receive the witness God has given.

Jesus is not lacking for testimony. John the Baptist bore witness. Jesus' works bore witness. The Father bore witness.

The Scriptures continue this day to bear witness. Moses bore witness. How much more confirmation could God possibly give?

Unbelief is not an intellectual problem, but it's a moral one. If you will not come to Christ, it is not because the evidence is weak, but because your heart is hard.

I plead with you this morning. Come to Christ and live. If you need to learn more, I'm certainly one of them. Receive the witness that God has given.

[ 32 : 29 ] Find eternal life in Christ. Secondly, if you're in Christ, beware a Bible without him.

We too often go to the Bible to know things about our God and not to know our God. God. The Jews searched the scriptures diligently, but they missed the very one to whom the scriptures pointed.

You can read the Bible, you can love theology, study doctrine, and still perish if Christ is not your Savior.

It's altogether possible to know a ton of stuff and not embrace Christ for the salvation of your soul. it's impossible, I mean, excuse me, it's possible to master the text and miss the Savior.

The ultimate question is not do I know the Bible, but rather do I know the one that the Bible reveals. Thirdly and lastly, delight in the glory of Christ.

[ 33 : 43 ] Verse 44 says, how can you believe when you receive glory from one another? You're willing to prop each other up and give each other attaboys and say way to go.

And do not seek the glory that comes from the only God. He talked about being sent by God, Jesus, right?

The glory of Christ is the way that we behold the glory of God. God, what a precious thing this is that we ought to delight in.

John says in chapter 17 that eternal life is to know God and the one whom he has sent. This is astounding. I don't fully comprehend all that it means.

I think we'll spend our lives trying to know God imperfectly so that one day we will know him perfectly. John Owen once wrote in his book The Glory of Christ, which if you've ever tried to read Owen, you may never try to read Owen again.

[ 34 : 56 ] If you'd like to read Owen, some of his writing is really difficult. This is the book to start with, The Glory of Christ. It's the simplest of his writing and it's a rich, rich read.

He said this though, quote, Make up your mind that to behold the glory of God by beholding the glory of Christ is the greatest privilege which is given to believers in this life.

Let me read that first part again. Make up your minds that to behold the glory of God by beholding the glory of Christ is the greatest privilege which is given to believers in this life.

This is the dawning of heaven. It is the first taste of that heavenly glory which God has prepared for us for this is eternal life to know the Father and Jesus Christ whom he has sent.

That's John 17 and verse 3. Let's pray together. here.