

## JESUS DEFENDS HIS TEACHINGS

### The Four Witnesses

#### Introduction:

1. Jesus made many extraordinary claims during His ministry, which caused many to be astounded at His teachings. Many were willing to follow Him because of His claims, but others outright rejected Him because of His claims.
2. We often condemn the Jewish leaders for their corruption, arrogance and manipulation of the Law of Moses to their benefit; traits which Jesus Himself exposed. However, one thing they could not be accused of was a failure to respect the godhood of Yahweh. Considering the claims that Jesus did make (including claims that He was the Son of God, claims of working with the Father, forgiving sins, occasions where He accepted worship, and setting aside Sabbath traditions, etc.), if they were made by an ordinary man and without proof, it would have been blasphemy and cause for complete rejection; even execution under the Old Law (**Leviticus 24:15-16**). It was this mindset of the enemies of Jesus that was a pivotal factor in their rejection of Him (though not the only reason).
3. Throughout His ministry, Jesus defended His authority; He made claims regarding His identity and was able to prove such claims. As a result, the Jews rejection of Jesus was their downfall (**Luke 13:34-35**). In this lesson we shall notice some things Jesus said and did which verified that He was the Son of God and the promised Messiah.
4. As the ministry of Jesus draws to a close, He is questioned by the elders and chief priests: “By what authority are you doing these things?” (**Matthew 21:23-27**; cp. **Mark 11:27-33**; **Luke 20:1-8**). The *things* He did include His teaching, casting out the money changers from the temple (Luke records this just before this account), etc.
  - a. Jesus answers them with a question of His own stating that He would answer them if they answered Him. The question was: “The baptism of John - Was it from heaven or from men?” They refused to answer Him and so Jesus also refuses to answer them (**Matthew 21:23-27**).
  - b. Was it a legitimate question? Yes! If one is to put his life and even his eternal destiny in the hands of one, it is only natural to verify the claims that are made. So why did Jesus not answer it? Because they did not ask it legitimately; they were not truly interested in the answer. He had interacted with them on numerous occasions prior to this about why He did what He did and appealed to them to honestly consider Him and His claims. They summarily dismissed His words every time.
  - c. Furthermore, there is good indication that the intent of the leaders asking Jesus this question on that occasion was with ulterior motives. They didn’t really want to know the answer, but they wanted something of which to accuse Him (cp. **Matthew 12:10**; **Luke 11:53-54**; **John 8:5-6**).
5. The four witness:

“If I bear witness of Myself, My witness is not true. There is another that beareth witness of Me; and I know that the witness which he witnesseth of Me is true. **Ye sent unto John, and he bare witness unto the truth.** But I receive not testimony from man: but these things I say, that ye might be saved. He was a burning and a shining light: and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light. But I have greater witness than that of John: for **the works which the Father hath given Me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of Me,** that the Father hath sent Me. And the Father Himself, which hath sent Me, hath borne witness of Me. Ye have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His shape. And ye have not His word abiding in you: for whom He hath sent, Him ye believe not. **Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me.** And ye will not come to Me, that ye might have life. I receive not honour from men. But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you. I am come in My Father's name, and ye receive Me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive. How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only? Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust. **For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed Me: for he wrote of Me**” (**John 5:31-46**).



This lesson is just as relevant to us today. As we strive to follow Jesus, we ought to do so with faith and hope. As we study the life of Jesus, there are only three possibilities: **1) He was a liar and deceiver, 2) He was a lunatic, or 3) He was who He claimed to be.**

- a. Jesus appeals to His audience, both friend and foe, to consider “witnesses” that verified His extraordinary claims.
- b. Under the Law of Moses, the mouth of two or three witnesses was essential in convicting a person: “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” (**Deuteronomy 19:18**). Jesus even enacted this in dealing with a sinning brother (**Matthew 18:16**).
- c. On this occasion, while Jesus had not been convicted of anything, He was appealing to “witnesses” that verified His teachings and claims. In particular Jesus pleads with them to consider four witnesses:

### **1. JOHN THE BAPTIST TESTIFIED OF HIM (John 5:32-35)**

John the Baptist testified that Jesus is the Son of God (John 1:29-34).

- a. John the Baptist was viewed by many as a great prophet (**Matthew 14:1-5**). Jesus described him as the Elijah that was to come before the day of the Lord (**Matthew 17:10-13**; cp. **Malachi 4:5-6, 3:1**).
- b. The Jewish leaders would not lay hands on John because the people viewed him as a great prophet. He taught with integrity and prepared the people for the coming Messiah (**Matthew 3:2, 9-12**).
- c. John witnesses of Jesus, saying, “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world” (**John 1:29**). He further says, “And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God” (**John 1:34**).
- d. Following this, John began declaring to his disciples that they should follow after Jesus (**John 3:25-30**). From these disciples would come some of the apostles of Jesus. Notice how some of John’s disciples express concerns because many were leaving him to follow Jesus (**John 3:27-36**). That is what John said must happen.

The scribes and Pharisees had nothing on John of which to convict him or accuse him. He testified of Jesus.

### **2. THE WORKS HE DID TESTIFIED OF HIM (John 5:36)**

If Jesus were not who He claimed to be, then He would not have been able to do the works He did. The works He did testify of Him.

- a. The gospel of John, as the other gospels, records a number of “works” that Jesus did. These works refer to the miracles Jesus performed (**Matthew 11:1-6**).
- b. The first recorded miracle of Jesus was turning water into wine in Cana (**John 2:1-11**). John says, “This beginning of signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory; and His disciples believed in Him” (**John 2:11**). Notice how John uses the word “signs” - a reference to these works being *proof* of something. Thayer, in describing these signs, says they can refer to “miracles and wonders which God authenticates the men sent by him, or by which men prove that the cause they are pleading is God’s”.
- c. John records at least seven miracles<sup>1</sup> that demonstrate the all-encompassing power of Jesus. Many of them are referred to as signs. These signs were the proof of Jesus claims regarding His identity – the Son of God (**John 20:30-31**).
- d. There are some other interesting passages in John in reference to these signs:
  - 1) Nicodemus, a Pharisee, comes to Jesus at night and says, “Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with Him” (**John 3:2**).
  - 2) After the miraculous feeding of the 5000, some in the crowd, among whom would have been religious leaders and critics, asked Him, “What sign will You perform then, that we may see it and believe You? What work will You do?” (**John 6:30**). Notice the value these leaders placed upon signs. Whether they wanted to admit it or not, the signs proved Jesus to be one to whom they should hearken (cp. **Deuteronomy 18:15-19**).
  - 3) The Jews question Jesus in the Temple:

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<sup>1</sup> (i) Changing Water Into Wine (John 2:1-11), (ii) Healing the Royal Official's Son (John 4:46-54), (iii) Healing the paralytic at the pool (John 5:1-18), (iv) Feeding over 5,000 with fish and loaves (John 6:1-14), (v) Walking on the water (John 6:15-25), (vi) Healing a man born blind (John 9:1-41), (vii) Raising Lazarus from the dead (John 11:1-46).

- a) Finding Jesus in the temple, the Jews surrounded Him and said to Him, “How long do You keep us in doubt? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly.” Jesus answered, “I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in My Father's name, they bear witness of Me” (John 10:24-25).
- b) Following this, Jesus challenges them, saying, “For which of those works do you stone Me?” (John 10:32). They said that it was because He made Himself God. Jesus responds, “Is it not written in your law, 'I said, You are gods'? If He called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken), 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'? If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me; but if I do, though you do not believe Me, believe the works, that you may know and believe that the Father is in Me, and I in Him” (John 10:32-38).
- c) Therefore they sought again to seize Him, but He escaped out of their hand” (John 10:34-39). Adam Clarke comments: “They could not reply to his arguments but by stones. The evidence of the truth could not be resisted; and they endeavored to destroy the person who spoke it. Truth may confound the obstinately wicked, but it does not convert them; and it is a just judgment of God, to leave those to perish in their gainsayings who obstinately continue to gainsay and disbelieve”.
- 4) After the resurrection of Lazarus (John 11:38-44), their conclusion about Jesus was, “Then the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered a council and said, “What shall we do? For this Man works many signs. If we let Him alone like this, everyone will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation” (John 11:45-48).
- 5) Toward the end of his gospel, John states, “And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name” (John 20:30-31).

Is it not amazing that Jesus did many signs, the very thing they demanded, and yet they still rejected Him?

### 3. THE SCRIPTURES TESTIFIED OF HIM (John 5:37-40)

There are literally hundreds of prophecies about the Messiah, and Jesus fulfilled them all.

- a. First, there was the occasion with witnesses when the Father directly testified of Jesus. At His baptism, as Jesus came up out of the water, He heard a voice saying, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matthew 3:17; cp. John 1:32-34). At least twice more, the Father would speak of Jesus – at the transfiguration (Matthew 17:5; John 12:27-30).
- b. Second, Jesus fulfilled *all* the prophecies of the Messiah in the Old Testament (cp. Luke 24:44). Jesus was challenging His critics to open their Bibles and search them (John 5:39). They would verify He was who He claimed to be. Prophecies of the detail we find in scripture can only come from the omniscient creator of the universe, God (cp. Isaiah 46:9-10; 48:3-5).
- c. Let us consider just a few prophecies:
  - 1) He would be born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:18, 23-25).
  - 2) He would be of the tribe of Judah (Jeremiah 23:5; Luke 3:23, 31, 33-34).
  - 3) He would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:1; Luke 2:4-7).
  - 4) The Spirit of the Lord would rest on Him (Isaiah 11:1-2; Matthew 3:16-17).
  - 5) He would be preceded by a messenger (Isaiah 40:3; Malachi 3:1; cp. John 1:22-23; Matthew 3:1-2).
  - 6) He would dwell in Galilee (Isaiah 9:1; Matthew 4:12-16).
  - 7) He would perform miracles (Isaiah 35:5-6; Matthew 9:35; etc.).

Many more prophecies were to come that would solidify even more, but these were available to the Jews at the time Jesus spoke the words of our text and could have been researched. The point: there was nothing to prove Jesus was not the promised Messiah, and plenty that proved Him to be the promised Messiah! They just chose to reject it because He did not fit their conception of the Messiah.

After His resurrection, as Jesus spoke to His apostles, He said, “These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me. And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures” (Luke 24:44).

The Father Himself testified of Jesus through all the prophecies made regarding Him, and through speaking in the hearing of others.

#### 4. MOSES TESTIFIED OF HIM (John 5:45-47)

Moses spoke of a prophet that God would raise up – that prophet was Jesus (cp. Acts 3:22-23).

- a. In the five books of Moses (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy) we find some more striking things said of the one for whom they were looking.
- b. Included in the prophecies made in these books were:
  - 1) The Seed promise through Abraham, Isaac & Jacob (Genesis 12:3; 26:4; 28:14).
  - 2) The Messiah would come from the tribe of Judah (Genesis 49:8-10).
  - 3) Moses’ prophecy regarding a prophet like himself:

“The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear” (Deuteronomy 18:15).

“I will raise up for them a Prophet like you from among their brethren, and will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him. And it shall be that whoever will not hear My words, which He speaks in My name, I will require it of him” (Deuteronomy 18:18-19).
- c. There is another consideration here: Moses gave them the Law from God at Sinai. Jesus had kept that Law perfectly (John 8:46; 1 Peter 2:21-22), though the Jewish leaders had corrupted its application (Matthew 5:21-48).
- d. Furthermore, we read this warning about prophets:

“But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in My name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die.’ And if you say in your heart, ‘How shall we know the word which the Lord has not spoken?’ - when a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the thing does not happen or come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him” (Deuteronomy 18:20).

Moses was clear that you would identify a prophet by whether or not his words came to pass. All the leaders had to do was verify what Jesus demonstrated and claimed before reaching a conclusion. Their presumptuous condemnation of Jesus without “due course” was a rejection of the Law of Moses itself. Jesus is challenging them to be consistent. As Jesus said, “Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust. **For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed Me: for he wrote of Me**” (John 5:31-46).

#### Conclusion:

1. In this text (John 5:31-46) we find the crux of the defense of Jesus. As you study the gospels, you find throughout a consistent defense of His works and message. The people with whom He interacted heard Him answer questions, the way He handled His critics, the compassionate message and actions He demonstrated to the crowds, and the works He did all verified that He was one worthy of consideration and acceptance.
2. As Jesus taught, His disciples did not have the completed word, but they had enough to know they could trust Him.
3. We have everything we need summarized in the gospels. We can do the research and verify the consistency of His claims. An honest heart will reach only one conclusion – Jesus was the Messiah we need to save us from our sins. Will you accept Him in obedience to His will?

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This outline is part of a study titled “A Study Of The Life Of Jesus” by Thomas Thornhill, Jr. I have adapted and modified it somewhat. You can see the original lesson here: [www.roseavenue.org/Study-Materials/Sermon-Outlines/Life%20of%20Jesus/Jesus14-DefendingClaims.html](http://www.roseavenue.org/Study-Materials/Sermon-Outlines/Life%20of%20Jesus/Jesus14-DefendingClaims.html)