

John Chapter 5 v 31 - 47

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[0 : 0 0] 31. John chapter 5 and verse 31. This is the word of God. Jesus said, if I testify about myself, my testimony is not valid. There is another who testifies in my favor, and I know that his testimony about me is valid. You have sent to John, and he has testified to the truth. Not that I accept human testimony, but I mention it that you may be saved. John was a lamp that burned and gave light, and you chose for a time to enjoy his light. I have testimony weightier than that of John, for the very work that the Father has given me to finish, and which I am doing, testifies that the Father has sent me. And the Father who sent me has himself testified concerning me. You have never heard his voice, nor seen his form, nor does his word dwell in you, for you do not believe the one he sent. You diligently study the scriptures, because you think that by them you possess eternal life.

these are the scriptures that testify about me. Yet you refuse to come to me to have life.

just to encourage you to come to worship next Sunday evening, I'm not preaching. It will be Joel, God willing. He has kindly changed with me for some personal reasons back home, and I'm very grateful to him. So he will be preaching next Sunday evening, and God willing, the Sunday evening afterwards, and then I will take his two services in July. But I'm sure it will become evident as the weeks progress. So next Sunday, God willing, I will be here in the morning, and Joel will be preaching in the evening. Now let's turn to God's word.

here in chapter 5. It's a remarkable chapter, and we could be here till tea time. And it's tempting, because it's a wonderful, wonderful chapter, which centers in the Lord Jesus Christ, and shows something of his magnificence and uniqueness. He is the unique son of the living God. And this passage, this chapter, records how he responded to the criticism that came to him because of his obvious, unique connection with God, the Heavenly Father. The problems all started, as recorded in chapter 5, with our Lord's visit to the pool of Bethesda. It was just outside the city of Jerusalem by the sheep gate. He used to take the sheep there, through there, through that gate to the temple for sacrifice. And this pool was there, and the tradition was held that any ill person who was able to get into the water, once the water had given periodic, that sign of troubling, that strange phenomena, the first ill person that got into the water would be healed. And so what happened was that people were gathering all around that pool, and there was a protective colonnade, five actually, interesting with the connection of Moses and the five books of Moses, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. But those five colonnades were protected from the weather to a certain extent. And so around the pool were people who were ill.

And the Lord Jesus had decided to go there. And he went to the pool, and it's quite evident that he had one man particularly in mind when he went to visit that pool. And this man had been paralyzed, and it's interesting that God the Holy Spirit saw fit to prompt John to record that he'd been paralyzed for 38 years. If any of you are interested in little details like this, and you like to see connections, the one other place of significance where 38 is mentioned would be in the wilderness journey.

[5 : 16] Although they traveled around the wilderness for 40 years, their increased travel because of unbelief amounted to 38 years. So there's an interesting connection there. Here is a man who's been paralyzed for 38 years, and the Lord Jesus Christ goes to him and he says, it's the most peculiar question really when you think about it. All these ill people. And he goes up to this man and he says, do you want to be made better? Now, can you imagine walking into any of our hospitals and walking up to the bed and saying, do you want to be better? Would you like to be well? Would you like to be made whole?

It's an interesting word actually that Jesus, that's recorded here for us, recording the words of Jesus. Do you want to be made whole? Whole. Not just, do you want to be made better? Do you want to be made well? And it's quite evident from how things happen that the Lord Jesus Christ was not only going to heal this man's body so that he could get up and walk, but he was going to do something even more important, far more important, far more important. He was going to heal the man inside. He was going to heal this sinner, this sinful man, this man who had offended God in numerous ways and must have offended God very, very significantly 38 years before, if our understanding of the connection is right, must have done something singularly wrong. An act or an event of unbelief, failure to do what God wanted him to do. And he became paralyzed. And the Lord Jesus Christ healed him.

And that man who hadn't walked for 38 years was able to get up and walk. And he was able to roll up. And it says he picked up his bed and walked in some of our translations. Don't imagine for one moment that he got up a 4-4 poster and put it on his shoulders. It would be much more like the kind of matting that you would use on the beach. It would be some kind of very lightweight thing. And he'd just pop it on his shoulder and off he went. And that caused the trouble. He was challenged because he was carrying a burden on the Sabbath. Jesus had told him to get up and walk.

And when the religious leaders at the time, some of those guys came and saw this man carrying his mat on Sabbath. They said, why are you carrying your mat? Well, the man who healed me, he told me to take up my bed and walk. And I did. Who is it? Don't know. The man hadn't got his name. And Jesus had gone.

And then Jesus found this man and said, see you are whole. Sin no more that nothing worse may happen.

[8 : 46] It's not may happen in the original. It definitely will happen in the original. It's in order that don't sin all.

Something worse will happen. And the Jewish leadership, some of them come to Jesus and they start their criticism.

This man has broken the Sabbath. See it in chapter 5? This man has broken the Sabbath. Verse 16, if you've got a Bible in front of you.

Not only that, when he's challenged by them, he starts talking about God and addressing God as Father, his Father.

So by the time we get to the record in verse 18, they hate him for two things. They're hostile.

[9 : 48] They're angry. First of all, because he did this, he told the man to carry his bed on the Sabbath, which was against their law, but obviously not against the Lord's.

It wasn't against God's law, otherwise the Lord Jesus Christ wouldn't have told him to do it. He's God, like the Father. He's the Son of God. But God, like the Father also.

And he would be breaking his own law, and that's inconceivable. So they criticize him for telling this man to carry his bed on the Sabbath, but they criticize him also, because by calling God his Father, he's making himself equal with God.

And that they regard as blasphemy. It's the truth. But they see it as blasphemy. Now you'll notice if you read through the chapter 5, when you get home, or when you get to your hotel or lodging place, you'll notice in chapter 5, that the Lord Jesus Christ doesn't start explaining himself, in terms of saying, oh, well, you're misunderstanding me, fellas.

I probably made a mistake over telling him to carry his bed on the Sabbath. You know, I was just that keen and enthusiastic to see him healed. And then, well, you know, when I called God Father, it's sort of like a stip in the tongue, you know.

[11 : 24] He doesn't do that at all. In fact, he makes it worse. He goes on, as it's recorded here in chapter 5, he goes on to show that the Son is equal to God in the way that he works.

Not only the things that he does, but he says in this passage, not only I'm equal with God in the way that I do things, I do them in the very likeness of him.

I do them likewise. Like him. You see, the devil could say, God's working and I'm working as well. But Jesus says, God my Father is working and I'm working in just the same way.

There's a lovely word, likewise. In the same way. In the original language. I'm working just like God works.

That's a marvellous claim, isn't it? A marvellous claim. It's either blasphemy or the most wonderful truth you can hear. He's equal with the Father, he says.

[12 : 32] In will, verse 19. In intellect, verse 20. In giving life, verse 21. In judgment, verse 22. In honour, verse 23. And you can look at that and you can see how he just makes it worse.

He shows how beautifully and wonderfully equal with God he is. In every area of his being. So wonderfully, wonderfully one with God, equal with the Father.

And they're more and more hostile towards him. And so, from verse 31, in that reading that we had a little earlier, he brings forth the evidence to demonstrate that he is the Son of the Living God.

the promised Son. The promised one right from the very beginning when the problems all started. The promised one who's spoken of time and time again.

Over 300 references to his coming. More beyond that. Specific prophecies, specific promises that God makes about this Son.

[13 : 52] So he starts there at verse 31. Now, some of you, as you read your Bibles, depends which version you're using. Jesus says a very strange thing in verse 31, doesn't he? If I testify of myself, if I testify about myself, my testimony isn't true.

I read from this version that I have, the NIV, which says valid. But I think some of the NIV actually have true. Is that? Yes? So, whichever version you're reading, you'll either read, if I testify of myself, my testimony isn't true.

And sometimes you read, if I testify of myself, my testimony isn't valid. Well, what a strange thing for Jesus to say if he was saying, if I testify of myself, my testimony isn't true.

Because a little bit later, in chapter 8, I think it is, verse 14, if I remember correctly, Jesus was again talking with some of the Pharisees, and he says, if I testify of myself, my testimony is true.

My testimony is valid. How do I explain that inconsistency? Is it really an inconsistency? It's actually due to language.

[15 : 08] The word that is translated true can be also translated valid. So both are accurate translations of the language, true and valid.

We decide which one from the context. And this you have to do often with language when you change from the Greek or the New Testament to our English.

You have to decide its meaning one or the other when there's a dual possibility. You decide from the context.

And in the context here, he definitely means valid. valid. Because what he's doing, as we shall see, is he's behaving before these critics as though he were in a Jewish court of law.

It all stems back to Deuteronomy 19 and verse 15. And the law stated there that no one could be sentenced and punished unless, unless, for a serious crime, unless there was two witnesses, preferably three.

[16 : 24] And that became standard procedure for establishing in Israel, establishing that a thing was valid or not valid at law. It's a way of establishing at law, formally, that this is true, real, the truth.

That's why when you come to the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus, he was sentenced against the law of God, against the law of Israel.

Because they tried hard to find two witnesses as was required by the law when they were trying to sentence Jesus, when they were wanting to arrest him and sentence him.

They tried to find two witnesses according to the law, but they couldn't find two that agreed. And so, in actual fact, Jesus Christ was sentenced to death by a Jewish court against the law of Israel.

Because, in actual fact, it was the Lord Jesus Christ who was there in court, there charged.

[17 : 40] And they couldn't find any witnesses. So, when Caiaphas got himself all frustrated that they couldn't find witnesses, he charged Jesus and says, do you say that you're the Son of God?

Are you the Son of God? What can Jesus say? He is the Son of God. He can't say, well, no, I'm not.

Oh, well, as far as you're concerned, I'm not. I mean, let's forget it. Let's go home, fellas. Are you the Son of God? You have said so. There is Blasphemy against Jewish law, against Roman law, he was sentenced to death for words from his own mouth because he admitted he is the Son of God.

So, he's here dealing with the Jewish hostile leaders as though in a court of law. If I speak on my own behalf, if I give testimony myself, it isn't valid.

It doesn't hold in a court of law. There's no reason for you to believe me. That's really what he's saying. There's no reason on earth to believe me if I'm saying it because loads of people could stand up and say, I am Jesus Christ.

[19 : 10] I am the Christ. I am the promised one. I am the Messiah. I am the King. So, he said, I'll bring my witnesses. And what does he do?

He brings one witness. He brings two three witnesses, just like the law required. That's why we know he's dealing with it in this particular context, the legal context.

I'll bring my witnesses. First witness, John the Baptist. Now, the Jewish leadership had a respect for John.

They had to have a respect because the people regarded him as a man of God. God. And so, he brings forth his first witness, John the Baptist.

And if you want to know a shortened version of John's testimony, read the gospel of the apostle John, chapter 1, from verse 19, where it starts, this is the testimony of John.

[20 : 15] It's the testimony of John the Baptist. And there's a whole chunk there. And John has some remarkable things. Oh, he was a fine man of God.

A wonderful man of God. The only one, as far as I know, the only one who was filled with the Holy Spirit of God before he was born.

And he lived it out. Oh, what a man of God. spent a lot of time studying the scriptures. He was born into a priestly family.

He had access to the temple. He had access to the scriptures. He could go any time he wished to study and read the scriptures. And oh, did he study hard.

And there is nothing more wonderful in all the world than studying the promises and prophecies about Messiah. They all point to Jesus.

[21 : 19] marvelous prophecies. And John the Baptist was privileged by God through the enabling and inspiring and enlightening work of the Holy Spirit to piece all the prophecies together.

He was the first one who done it. To piece all the prophecies together and say they're all in one. God the Holy Spirit revealed to John when he was out there in the wilderness thinking and praying and studying and meditating.

God told him that he was going to introduce the Messiah. He was going to introduce the promised one. He told him that this promised one would come down to the Jordan where he was baptizing and would be baptized by him.

He was promised that as he was baptized, as he came up out of the water from baptism, John would see a dove-like form which would symbolize the descent, the anointing of the Holy Spirit upon this one.

Because Messiah is the Hebrew word meaning anointed. And it's exactly the same word as the Greek word Christos, Christ.

[22 : 37] So Messiah is the anointed one. Christ, it's the same one, Christ, Messiah. The anointed of God, anointed by the Holy Spirit. He's now Messiah.

He's been anointed, spirit-filled for his unique work. The man, Jesus, now spirit-filled for his unique work.

What does John say? I testify that this is the Son of God. Verse 34, John 1, I testify this is the Son of God.

You see, he got it all worked out. He connected things together as we will see a little later. And to say that he's the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, to say that he's the King of Israel, as one of John's disciples says, is to say exactly the same thing.

He's the Son of God who is the Lamb of God. He's the Son of God who is the King of Israel. He is the Son of God who is the Saviour of the world, the only Saviour.

[23 : 55] So, John's testimony. I bring it forth, says Jesus. But I've got another testimony. He makes a little bit of reference where it's not quite clear than just is he meaning the Father at that point or is he going to talk, now move on to the works.

But let's consider the works as his second testimony. The works. Think about the miracles. Amazing miracles that Jesus performed. These testify of him.

in Isaiah 35 it is said that Messiah will perform, when God comes, he'll perform miracles. The blind will see, the deaf will hear, the lame will walk, the dead will rise.

There was a time when John the Baptist was in prison before he was executed. John the Baptist had a visit from two of his disciples. And there were two men who were sticking with their loyalty to John the Baptist and John didn't want that.

He wanted them to go to Jesus. He had prepared men, he taught men, he'd had those men gather around him in the wilderness and he taught them the scriptures of the Old Testament and he told them Messiah is coming so that when he points to Jesus and when he introduces Jesus he wants them all to go to him.

[25 : 22] But there's two of them sticking in their loyalty and they haven't moved. So he sends these two to Jesus. He says go and ask him are you the coming one or shall we look for somebody else?

In other words are you the Messiah? Are you the Christ? Are you the promised one? You find it in Matthew chapter 11. And Jesus knows exactly what John's doing here.

He's sending these two. Are you the coming one? He says you go tell John what you see and hear. The blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the dumb speak.

In other words, the marks of the Messiah are what I'm doing. The signs, the miracles, they're proof. Now don't misunderstand that passage of scripture please.

It's even written in Christian books that John was having second thoughts about Jesus. That's horrible. John the Baptist was not depressed.

[26 : 28] John the Baptist was not losing his faith in prison. These things are written and they're wrong. They're misleading people in their understanding of that great and godly man, John the Baptist.

Look at what Jesus says in Matthew 11. He says, go and tell John what you see. And then what does he do? He turns to the people who are there with him and say, about John the Baptist, what did you go out into the wilderness to see?

A reef blown by the wind. He doesn't say that about a man who is having second thoughts. He doesn't say that about a man who is beginning to doubt in his faith. He's actually reassuring people to explain to them that you can have every confidence in John the Baptist.

What we've just done is to try and unhook these two disciples. It's a technique. John used. John was sending these two disciples so that they would hear without confrontation, in a very subtle and dignified way, Jesus knew what he was doing and he said to you just go tell John what you see and hear.

It's just a way of getting these two unhooked rather than a direct connection. You'll have to give some thought to that. But if you look at the context afterwards it's absolutely certain that Jesus is saying this man hasn't lost his faith.

[27 : 55] This man is strong and true, utterly reliable. He's straight up faithful to the end. So that's John the Baptist and the miracles.

The miracles that Jesus performed, the wonderful miracles he performed. There were miracles performed by Moses, Joshua, miracles performed by Elijah and Elisha, and great periods where there were no miracles at all or just an odd one here and there.

But then comes Jesus and the apostles. And Jesus performs more miracles than any of the others put together. Marvelous miracles.

miracles. And these testify that he's the son of God. Remember what Peter said on the day of Pentecost?

This man, Jesus, whom you crucified, God attested to him. God testified to him through miracles and wonders and signs which God did through him in your midst as you yourselves know.

[29 : 16] And in Hebrews chapter 2 and verse 4, we're told that the Holy Spirit was testifying to the Lord Jesus as he brought the gospel and testifying to the apostles who continued that work of gospel preaching through miracles, signs and wonders done by the Holy Spirit.

God, the Holy Spirit testifying through the miracles. I bring my miracles, says Jesus. These are my second witness. But I've got another witness. I bring my third witness, the Old Testament scriptures.

These testify of me. You search the scriptures because in them you think you'll have life, but you won't come to me. It's all about me. And that's no boast.

It's the truth. And the whole of his person and work, the features of his being and person and work are all given in Old Testament scriptures.

Let me just give you an appetizer of some of the things. The Old Testament prophets prophesied that the Christ would be born in the village of Bethlehem, Micah chapter 5, of the tribe of Judah, Genesis 49, a descendant of King David, 2 Samuel 7, the son of a virgin, Isaiah 7 verse 14.

[30 : 49] He would be preceded by a messenger, Isaiah 40 verse 3, and go on and on and on. Details, specific details.

There's some intriguing details. God puts them in just to confirm to us. In Isaiah 53, it says there that the promised one, the Messiah, is going to suffer.

He's going to be numbered with transgressors. He's going to be numbered with criminals. And it says, they made his grave with the wicked in his death and the rich man.

Have you noticed that? Made his grave with the wicked and with the rich in his death. And you can imagine Isaiah looking, God's just given him this word and he records it.

When God has finished revealing truth to him, you can just imagine that prophet, that godly prophet thinking, how's that going to happen? How can they make his grave with the wicked and with the rich in his death?

[31 : 54] But then you read the account of our Lord's death and it's staggering isn't it? He dies taking a cross that wasn't made for him, it was made for Barabbas, interesting, Bar Abbas, son of the father, Bar, son, Abba, father, Bar Abbas, son of the father, whose father was him, whose was his father, the devil, whose were our Lord's father.

son of the father, son of God. He took the cross that had been knocked together for Barabbas. He carried that cross and the grave for Barabbas was there with the criminals, an open grave where they threw the bodies in in the most indignified manner and the birds and the animals, the dogs, would come and eat the flesh.

his grave was made with the wicked. Amen. Isaiah was right. But, the very last moment, under the sweet influence of the Holy Spirit of God, Joseph, one of the Pharisees, and Nicodemus, another of the Pharisees, risked their position in the Sanhedrin, risked their social standing in the community, risked their very existence as respected Jews, by taking down that body, and you can imagine it was done with the most wonderful dignity and the most wonderful gentleness.

They took down that body from that cross and carried that body not very far, to the place of the garden where there's a tomb.

Joseph has had it chiseled out of the rock for his body when his turn came. Nobody had been there, and they took our Lord's body and laid it in the tomb, and Joseph, we're told, was rich.

[34 : 17] made his grave, and there are lots of them in the Old Testament scriptures, these lovely, lovely insights that God gives us to confirm to us Jesus is the Christ of God.

So he brings his first, John the Baptist, he brings his second, his miracles, he brings his third, the scriptures of the Old Testament. But who really is testifying to the sonship of the Lord Jesus?

John the Baptist wasn't there in eternity, he couldn't say, I've seen him, I know that he is speaking as one who has been told.

Who told him? God the Father, God the Son, they're the only real witnesses, they were there. They could testify to the Lord Jesus, being the only begotten of the Father.

And the miracles that Jesus performed, they were done by the Holy Spirit, Acts chapter 1, 22, Hebrews 2, 4. They were done by God the Father and God the Holy Spirit.

[35 : 27] And the scriptures, well read 2 Timothy 3, 16, all scripture is given breathed out by God, the very word of God. And isn't it in Peter, where in 2 Peter we're told that no scripture is of any personal declaration, but holy men of God were moved by the Holy Spirit.

That's how the scriptures were given. They were moved gently, influenced sweetly. They wanted to know the will of God. They weren't puppets on a string. They were prayerful and serious.

And when God spoke to them inwardly, they recognized the word from God and recorded it for us. they were moved by the Holy Spirit in the writing and recording of scripture.

What an amazing thing. So the real witness is the Father and the Holy Spirit. And isn't it wonderful, isn't it wonderful that God is still witnessing?

We don't have John the Baptist. I can't bring John the Baptist and stand him up here. I can't bring the miracles of Jesus and say these are what he's done in front of you. But I can bring the scriptures and I've got the word of God.

[36 : 50] And we still got God the Holy Spirit and God the Father to testify. Also the Son of course, he's going to testify through his own scriptures now. And when the light dawns and we see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, whenever we young or old, rich or poor, wise or not so wise, whenever we see Jesus and recognize him as the Son of the living God, it's because God has touched our lives.

What a blessing! Very young, if you know and love the Lord Jesus, it's because your life has been touched by God.

You older ones, if you love the Lord Jesus, it's because your lives have been personally touched by God. And that's something you can live on.

You can face anything with that. That God loves me and has touched my life and transformed me. I know in whom I have believed, I know where I'm going and I know who's going with me.

Praise God. Amen.