

CLEAR CUT EVIDENCE THAT JESUS WAS THE MESSIAH

John 5:30-38

When someone asks you, “How do you know that Jesus was God and that He is the only way to heaven? That is a pretty arrogant claim? After all, what about all these other religions with their gods? How can you say they are not also a way to Heaven?” What would you reply? Today’s study should give you some answers for those questions.

In the last part of John 5 we see Jesus introducing six witnesses to support the truth of His claims. We will look at five of those today. In these verses Jesus proves His claim that He was sent by God to be the Messiah.

In John 5:30-31, Jesus says:

30 “I can do nothing on My own initiative. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.”

31 “If I alone testify about Myself, My testimony is not true.”

(1) It would appear that God Himself is bearing witness to Jesus in verses 31 and 32. This would be confirmed in John 8:18 where John quotes Jesus as saying: “*I am He who testifies about Myself, and¹ the Father who sent Me testifies about Me.*” God had also confirmed who Jesus was at Jesus’ baptism: “*After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and² lighting on Him, 17and behold, a voice out of the heavens said, ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased’” (Matthew 3:16,17 NAS).*

Jesus was assured that He had been given a divine mission by God. He therefore had that witness within Himself. You see the Devil himself had already come to Jesus to tempt Him with anything in the world He wanted, and Jesus did not give in to the temptation. He therefore knew beyond the shadow of a doubt that He was the Messiah sent by God.

(2) Jesus felt that He could be His own witness because He was not prejudiced in one way or another regarding who He was. He was after all not seeking after His own will but rather the will of God who had sent Him. But He knew the Jewish leaders would not accept that. There was a legal requirement in the courts at that time which did not allow for a person to be his/her own witness. So Jesus called in three other witnesses to prove

¹ John 5:37; 1 John 5:9

² Lit *coming upon Him*

His claim to be the Messiah. The first witness He pointed to was **John the Baptist**.

John 5:32-35 NAS:

32 *“There is another who testifies of Me, and I know that the testimony which He gives about Me is true.*

33 *“You have sent to **John**, and he has testified to the truth.*

34 *“But the testimony which I receive is not from man, but I say these things so that you may be saved.*

35 *“He was the **lamp** that was **burning** and was shining and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light.*

(3) In John 1:7 **the apostle John** wrote that **John the Baptist** came as a witness *to testify about the light*, which of course was Jesus. John had known who Jesus was and had told what he knew to the people of Israel. John told the people that Jesus was the Savior they had been waiting for (John 1:23), the Lamb of God (John 1:29,36), and the Son of God (John 1:34).

John was a “burning and a shining lamp” (**Jesus is the Light**, John 8:12) calling attention to the Light, and the Jewish people were excited about his ministry. They also highly respected his integrity. To the Jews a burning lamp also represented the Baptist’s sincerity.³ However, their initial enthusiasm for his message did not last and no one made any effort to save John when he was sent to prison by Herod. The tax collectors and sinners accepted John’s message and were converted, but the religious leaders refused to accept John the Baptist’s message (Matthew 21:28–32), even though they spent a great deal of time associating with him and listening to what he had to say.

There will always be people who try to get just a little bit of the public acclaim of a national figure by just being seen with them. It was true at the time of Moses when he led God’s people out of bondage in Egypt and it is true regarding Church leaders today. They like to be part of the pomp and ceremony without accepting the teaching of the leader. Many people followed Moses and Israel out of Egypt, people who were impressed with the miracles but not necessarily believers in the message or the God who sent it. The prophets and Apostles, as well as the great leaders in Church history, all had to put up with shallow people who followed the crowd but refused to obey the truth. We have far too many such people in churches today.

It should be clear that Christ needs no letters of recommendation, no testimonials or credentials from an institute of higher learning, a government agency, or a high ranking religious official. The things that He said and the things that He did spoke for themselves. Why then was Jesus willing to seek out the further testimony of John? We see in verse 34 that, even though He knows who He is, Jesus is willing to bring forth additional evidence that He is who He says He is so that our faith might be strengthened by the testimony of additional witnesses. Jesus therefore produces additional witnesses to testify that He was sent by God. Jesus knows us. He knows what dunderheads we can be. He

³ Henry, Matthew: *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume*. Peabody: Hendrickson, 1996, c1991, S. Jn 5:31.

knows that we might not believe in gravity until we fall out of a fifth story window, twice. Christ considers our human shortcomings and brings Himself down to our ability to understand, and for the sake of our salvation provides us with what we need, which in His case is even further evidence to prove He is the Messiah.

The testimony of John the Baptist was public testimony. The Jewish leaders had earlier sent a delegation of priests and Levites to speak to John about his testimony concerning who he considered Jesus to be. In today's legal jargon we might say that this delegation was sent to take John's deposition, which gave him an opportunity of publishing what he had to say. This was therefore a very official testimony from John regarding who Jesus was. It was also a true testimony: John the Baptist bore witness to the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, as any good witness ought to do. John was considered to be such a holy and good man that he was considered absolutely truthful and honest and no one could imagine that he would ever be guilty of a lie. John would not have identified Jesus as the Messiah unless he knew it to be true.

In verse 35 Jesus mentions the respect people have for John, and at the same time He criticizes them for not holding on to the truth John had given them, which was that Jesus was the Messiah. What foolish people. Not much different from people today are they? Do you think that if God were to bring back from the dead some really famous figure from history like George Washington or Abraham Lincoln, and tell all the world it was the resurrection power of Jesus Christ that brought them back to life, people would believe it? Probably not. In fact they would most likely begin making up their own explanations for the occurrence and others would probably find those made up stories more believable than the truth.

(4) John 5:36 NAS:

36 "But the testimony which I have is greater than the testimony of John; for the works which the Father has given Me to accomplish—the very works that I do—testify about Me, that the Father has sent Me.

How can we know that the Father and Son are One? How can we be sure Jesus is able to provide the eternal life He promises? Because Jesus pointed His critics to the evidence. It is not just that John the Baptist, a prophet, testified on Jesus' behalf. God the Father added His confirmation that Jesus was Messiah by the miracles that He enabled Jesus to perform right in front of His enemies. Even the rulers recognized the truth of Jesus' ability to do such things, as Nicodemus had admitted in John 3:2: "We know You are a Teacher who has come from God. For no one could do the miraculous signs You are doing if God were not with him."

The rulers could not deny the evidence. But they still would not commit themselves to Jesus, or honor Him as God.⁴

John 5:37-38 NAS:

37 "And the Father who sent Me, He has testified of Me. You have neither

⁴ Richards, Larry; Richards, Lawrence O.: *The Teacher's Commentary*. Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1987, S. 722.

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."

(4) We have already seen four possible ways in which God the Father confirmed that Jesus was His Son. There was also another way and that was by **fulfillment of the prophecies** of the Old Testament. Jesus tells them in verse 37: "You have not heard his voice." It appears that Christ is criticizing the Jews here for not believing the evidence that He was the Messiah. In doing this He says that they even refused to listen to the testimony of God. Jesus stated that God had given sufficient evidence of Jesus' credentials, but the Jewish leaders had ignored that evidence. The first thing Jesus tells them is that they had not heard God's voice. The word *hear*, as it is used in this verse, is to be understood as *obey* or *listen to* (John 5:25). We could interpret this verse as saying that the Jews, in typical fashion, would not listen to or obey what God was telling them.

Again in verse 37 Jesus says: *You have not seen his form*. No human being has ever seen God (John 1:18). But the word *form*, which is used in this verse, does not mean God himself. It refers to an appearance which God can take. For the sake of a clearer understanding you might even consider that God appears in a disguise. God has made His presence visible to people at different times but it has always been in another form because no human being may look upon God and live (Exodus 33:20). We can see this more clearly in God's relationship with Moses. You may not have known this about God.

Numbers 12:1-8 NAS:

1 Then **Miriam** and **Aaron** spoke against Moses because of the Cushite woman whom he had married (for he had married a Cushite woman);

2 and they said, "Has the LORD indeed spoken only through Moses? Has He not spoken through us as well?" And the LORD heard it.

3 (Now the man Moses was very humble, more than any man who was on the face of the earth.)

4 Suddenly the LORD said to Moses and Aaron and to **Miriam**, "You three come out to the tent of meeting." So the three of them came out.

5 Then the LORD came down in a pillar of cloud and stood at the doorway of the tent, and He called Aaron and Miriam. When they had both come forward,

6 He said, "Hear now My words: If there is a prophet among you, I, the LORD, shall make Myself known to him in a vision.

I shall speak with him in a dream.

7 "Not so, with My servant Moses, He is faithful in all My household;

8 With him I speak mouth to mouth, Even openly, and not in dark sayings, And he beholds the form of the LORD.

The word *form* in John 5:37 actually applied to the visible symbol of God, not God Himself. It was the same in the Old Testament when God's presence was made known in the cloud that rested on the tabernacle in Numbers 9:15,16. The word *form* in John 5:37 is the same word that is applied to the Holy Spirit appearing in bodily shape like a dove.

from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

The Old Testament Scriptures talk about Jesus from the very beginning to the very end. How is it then that the very people who preserved these writings of the Old Testament were blind to recognize their Messiah when He came to them as Jesus? Peter, the other apostles, and the disciples of Jesus recognized Him for who He was. Why not the Jewish leaders?

That question really is not that difficult to answer if we have a working knowledge of the Bible. They would not let God's Word in the Old Testament get from their minds down to their hearts. They knew what the Word said but they would not let it penetrate their hearts and change their lives. We can memorize the Bible from beginning to end but if we do not allow that knowledge to change our hearts and our lives it is meaningless. The purpose of reading and studying the Bible is not to gain knowledge so that we can impress others. The purpose of reading and studying the Bible is to allow God to change our lives so that we can become more and more like Jesus.

So, there was something wrong with the motives of these Jewish leaders: they did not see Christ in their own Scriptures as Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 3:1-18 NLT

*1 Are we beginning to praise ourselves again? Are we like others, who need to bring you letters of recommendation, or who ask you to write such letters on their behalf? Surely not! 2 The only letter of recommendation we need is you yourselves. Your lives are a letter written in our hearts; everyone can read it and recognize our good work among you.3 Clearly, you are a letter from Christ showing the result of our ministry among you. This "letter" is written not with pen and ink, but with the Spirit of the living God. **It is carved not on tablets of stone, but on human hearts.***⁷

Every true believer is an "open letter" from Christ, because his or her life will show God's work within his or her personality. Since Paul won many of the Corinthians to Christ, they themselves are "letters" that attest to his ministry.

*4 We are confident of all this because of our great trust in God through Christ.5 It is not that we think we are qualified to do anything on our own. Our qualification comes from God. 6 He has enabled us to be ministers of his **new covenant**. This is a covenant not of written laws, but of the Spirit. The old written covenant ends in death; but under the new covenant, the Spirit gives life.*

This is the New Covenant that was promised in Jeremiah 31:31-34. Let us turn there and read it before going on in 2 Corinthians 3.

31 "The time is coming," declares the Lord, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.

⁷ New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-34).

32 *It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them,” declares the Lord.*

33 *“This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time,” declares the Lord. “I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.*

34 *No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest,” declares the Lord. “For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.” (NIV)*

Now see if you can make the connection with the prophecy in Jeremiah 31:31-34 as we continue in 2 Corinthians 3.

7 The old way, with laws etched in stone, led to death, though it began with such glory that the people of Israel could not bear to look at Moses’ face. For his face shone with the glory of God, even though the brightness was already fading away.8 Shouldn’t we expect far greater glory under the new way, now that the Holy Spirit is giving life? 9 If the old way, which brings condemnation, was glorious, how much more glorious is the new way, which makes us right with God! 10 In fact, that first glory was not glorious at all compared with the overwhelming glory of the new way.11 So if the old way, which has been replaced, was glorious, how much more glorious is the new, which remains forever! 12 Since this new way gives us such confidence, we can be very bold.

Paul knows there is no way for the Old Testament Law to bring righteousness to a person. But the Gospel, which fulfills God’s promise through Jeremiah of a New Covenant, can bring righteousness. Because the Law came from God it was glorious because anything that comes from God is glorious. It was glorious even though the Law was temporary as well as inadequate. But the New Covenant provides so much more. Our hope can now be that we will experience a progressive transformation, a change of heart and mind, as the New Covenant brings righteousness into our lives. We no longer have to pretend we are perfect. We can be honest with others. They will see our flaws and failures, but because God is at work in us, they will also see the face of Jesus as He works His changes within us. It is the hope and the certain expectation, that God is changing us from within that frees us to be real.⁸

2 Corinthians 3:13-15:

13 We are not like Moses, who put a veil over his face so the people of Israel would not see the glory, even though it was destined to fade away.14 But the people’s minds were hardened, and to this day whenever the old covenant is being read, the same veil covers their minds so they cannot understand the truth. And this veil can be removed only by believing in Christ.15 Yes, even today when they read Moses’ writings,

⁸ Op. Cit., Richards.

their hearts are covered with that veil, and they do not understand.

Paul here addresses the contrast between the new and old covenant ministry (verses 7–18). The old covenant (the Law) administered by Moses offered no inner change of heart for a person. This is illustrated by Moses himself, for after leaving God’s presence he put a veil over his face so the people would not see the splendor, which God’s presence had placed upon him, fade away. You see, Moses did not want But after Jesus was crucified and resurrected, because God’s Spirit now lives within the believer, a process of inner transformation has taken place. That transformation is reflected by an increasingly clear reflection of the glory of God through the believer’s life. The believer reflects the splendor of Christ Himself, and that is the mark of New Covenant ministry that will last forever.⁹

The veil Moses wore to hide the radiance which shone from his face after being alone with God (Exodus 34:29–35) worked both ways. It hid Moses’ face. But it also concealed vital truths about a relationship with God. The danger of concealing ourselves from others is that in the process we will keep them ignorant about the God who is at work in us. Symbolically, Paul says, that veil still lies over the Old Testament, concealing its real meaning from those who continue to insist on following Moses.¹⁰

*16 But whenever someone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.
17 For the Lord is the Spirit, and wherever the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. 18 So all of us who have had that veil removed can see and reflect the glory of the Lord. And the Lord—who is the Spirit—makes us more and more like him **as we are changed** into his glorious image.*

God is committed to make those who believe in Jesus like Jesus. This is taught often in the New Testament.¹¹ We will experience the fulfillment of this commitment at our resurrection. But as this verse points out, the Holy Spirit even now is at work within us, creating a gradual process directed toward making our moral characters more like Jesus. Through this gradual but real change in us others will see Jesus’ face.

The Holy Spirit leads believers, He empowers them for holy living, and here we see that He works a progressive moral transformation as we are obedient and responsive to the Lord. That transformation is displayed in character and personality, producing the fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22–23).¹²

These Jewish leaders were deeply religious men on the outside, but they really did not want to give glory to anyone but themselves, including the true God. You might say they had heart trouble, not physically but spiritually. They did not love the Lord God with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength, and neither did they want to love Jesus that way.

⁹ Richards, Larry: *The Bible Reader's Companion*. Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1991, S. 776.

¹⁰ Op Cit., Richards.

¹¹ Rom. 8:29; 1 Cor. 15:49–54; Col. 3:10; 1 John 3:2.

¹² Op Cit., Richards.

John 14:9-11 NLT:

9 Jesus replied, "Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and yet you still don't know who I am? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father! So why are you asking me to show him to you?"

10 Don't you believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words I speak are not my own, but my Father who lives in me does his work through me.

11 Just believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me. Or at least believe because of the work you have seen me do.

So, coming back to our opening question, "How do you know Jesus is God and the Messiah?" we find four things so far in this passage. 1) Because God the Father Himself said so. 2) Because Jesus affirmed it Himself. 3) Because of the witness of John the Baptist and 4) also the witness given by all the miracles Jesus did. And 5) By fulfillment of prophecy. The sixth piece of evidence, or witness, we will look at next week.

Based on what we have studied regarding this passage, we can conclude that God came to earth in the form of Jesus, meaning that He as a man allows people to see and hear God in the flesh. Jesus is God. God came and lived among the people of 1st century Judah, displaying for them supernatural qualities and teaching. What a terrible mistake they made by rejecting Him and what a terrible price they have paid over the last 2,000 years for continuing to reject Him. Even though God has restored the nation of Israel, they continue to live with war or the threat of war daily. We in the United States have the same manifestation of God through the Bible and we are making the same mistake that Israel made. May God have mercy on the United States for the true believers that remain and through them begin a revival that will heal our nation.