

Exalting Jesus Christ

"Five Witnesses for the Defense"

INTRODUCTION:

- I. Last week during the introduction to the lesson, I said that man had debated for centuries the question, "What is God really like?"
 - A. As we all know, it seems everyone has a different concept of Who God is and what God is really like.
 1. But, as I mentioned last week, suppose someone could stand up and says, "I am God! I am the way, the truth and the life."
 - a. Now we have something we can verify – we could examine His claim to see if He is speaking the truth or lying.
 2. And, as we saw from last week's lesson, Jesus made a number of bold claims concerning His deity – boldly claiming that He was the Son of God, and equal in every way to God the Father.
 3. While the claims Jesus made was truly earth-shaking, and despite the fact that He was able to back up those claims with a most notable miracle, they were still just His claims.

B. But imagine for a moment the impact Jesus would have on His critics if He could offer other testimony to back up His claims of being the Son of God?

1. What if Jesus could offer other witnesses – in addition to His own testimony – to offer their testimony to support His claims?

a. What would the impact be on His critics – the Pharisees – who charged Jesus with being a Law-breaker by healing a man on the Sabbath, and who charged Jesus with blasphemy because He claimed equality with God?

b. And what would the impact be on His disciples – on those who followed Him and believed Him to truly be the Son of God?

c. And lastly, how would all this evidence proving that Jesus was truly the Son of God impact your faith as a believer in Jesus Christ?

II. As we continue our studies in the gospel of John, entitled "Exalting Jesus Christ," we want to go back to the fifth chapter of John as the final scene in this incredible drama plays out – where Jesus offers the testimony of "Five Witnesses for the Defense."

A. As I said from the outset, the gospel of John was written to increase the faith of believers, and to offer irrefutable evidence to unbelievers in the deity and godhood of Jesus Christ.

1. But in this fifth chapter, the final scene in drama we have been watching is about to be played out.
 - a. The curtain opened in scene one with a thirty-eight year old paralyzed man instantly healed by Jesus – a miracle that sparked instant controversy between Jesus and His critics, the Pharisees.
 - b. The curtain opened again in scene two with Jesus standing before His critics, making one bold claim after another that He was, in fact, the Messiah – the very Son of God.
 - c. And now, the curtain rises on the final scene where Jesus introduces the testimony of four additional witnesses that offer their defense in support of His startling claims.
- B. Why, you might ask, would Jesus feel compelled to offer the testimony of others to back His claims? Jesus provides us the answer Himself:
 1. **John 5:31** – *"If I bear witness of Myself, My witness is not true."*
 - a. This does not mean that His claims are false. It simply means that His testimony alone would not be valid in a court of law.
 - b. The Law of Moses said: **Deuteronomy 19:15** – *"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."*

- C. So, as this final scene plays out, imagine yourself sitting in a court of law listening to the testimony of witnesses concerning the claims Jesus made about being the Son of God.
 - 1. And ask yourself if you believe this testimony is strong enough to support His claims.

Body:

- I. As the curtain rises on this courtroom drama, imagine Jesus preparing to call His witnesses to the stand.
 - A. His first witness for the defense – God the Father.
 - 1. **John 5:32** – *"There is another who bears witness of Me, and I know that the witness which He witnesses of Me is true."*
 - 2. There are two grammatical points in the original Greek that add color to this verse.
 - a. First, notice how Jesus introduces the Father: *"There is another. . ."*
 - (1). The word *"another"* in the Greek means "another of the same kind." Jesus is making a very subtle reference to deity.
 - (2). Essentially Jesus was saying, "there is another just like Me, of the same nature and essence as Me."

- (3). The Pharisees clearly understood this "other" of whom Jesus spoke was God the Father.
- b. And second, notice the words "bears witness" – which is in a tense in the Greek that suggests continual action.
 - (1). Jesus was essentially saying, "The Father continually bears witness of Me – over and over, and over again."
3. The Father continually testifies to the claims of Jesus.
 - a. The Father announced the birth of Jesus with prophecies, angels, and a miraculous star.
 - b. At the baptism of Jesus, the Father testified: **Matthew 3:17b** – *"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."*
 - c. The Father testified of Jesus at the Transfiguration: **Matthew 17:5b** – *"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!"*
 - d. The Father testified again at the Crucifixion: **Matthew 27:51-54** – *Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split, 52 and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; 53 and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many. 54 So when the centurion and those with him, who were guarding Jesus, saw the earthquake and*

*the things that had happened, they feared greatly, saying,
"Truly this was the Son of God!"*

- e. The Father testified again at the Resurrection through an angel from heaven: **Matthew 28:5-7** – *But the angel answered and said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. 6 He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. 7 And go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead, and indeed He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him. Behold, I have told you."*
- f. The Father testified again through angels at the Ascension of Jesus into heaven: **Acts 1:9-11** – *Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. 10 And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, 11 who also said,
"Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven?
This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven."*
- g. And the Father testified of Jesus again through the prophet David when Jesus entered heaven to take His place at the right hand of God: **Acts 2:34-35** – *"For David did not ascend*

into the heavens, but he says himself: 'The Lord said to my Lord, 'Sit at My right hand, 35 Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.'"

4. Time after time, after time, the Father testified that Jesus is truly the Son of God. And in a searing rebuke of His accusers, Jesus underscores the importance of the Father's testimony:
 - a. **John 5:37-38** – *"And the Father Himself, who sent Me, has testified of Me. You have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His form. 38 But you do not have His word abiding in you, because whom He sent, Him you do not believe."*
- B. But Jesus is only starting with His list of witnesses. Next, Jesus calls John the Baptist to testify in His defense.
 1. **John 5:33-35** – *"You have sent to John, and he has borne witness to the truth. 34 Yet I do not receive testimony from man, but I say these things that you may be saved. 35 He was the burning and shining lamp, and you were willing for a time to rejoice in his light."*
 2. The testimony John the Baptist had offered concerning the deity of Jesus was clear and simple.
 - a. **John 1:29-34** – *The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! 30 This is He of whom I said, 'After me comes a Man who is preferred before me, for He was before me.' 31 I*

did not know Him; but that He should be revealed to Israel, therefore I came baptizing with water."

32 And John bore witness, saying, "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He remained upon Him. 33 I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' 34 And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God."

3. Like moths flittering around a candle flame, these Pharisees had swarmed to John – that is, until they got too close to the flame.
 - a. Then, one by one, they all took flight.
4. They were drawn to the light of John's message, but they couldn't stand the heat.
 - a. **Matthew 3:5-12** – *Then Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region around the Jordan went out to him 6 and were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins. 7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, "Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8 Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance,*

9 and do not think to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. 10 And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 11 I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. 12 His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

5. John's testimony was crystal clear to these self-righteous Pharisees – the Messiah is coming, and you better clean up your act, or He will destroy you like the farmer who burns up *"the chaff with unquenchable fire."*
- C. But there is a third witness Jesus offers that can testify of His deity – the works (miracles) He has performed.
1. **John 5:36** – *But I have a greater witness than John's; for the works which the Father has given Me to finish — the very works that I do — bear witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me.*

2. As powerful as the testimony of John the Baptist was, Jesus said there is *"a greater testimony"* than that of John's.
 - a. *" . . .the very works that I do – bear witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me."*
3. As I said earlier, the gospel of John provides irrefutable evidence of the deity of Jesus Christ.
 - a. And we've only gotten a glimpse of the immensity of that evidence:
 - (1). Jesus turned plain water into the finest aged wine.
 - (2). Jesus healed the son of a government official from a distance of some twenty miles.
 - (3). And now, Jesus has healed a man who had been paralyzed for thirty-eight years.
 - b. In the chapters ahead, Jesus will:
 - (1). Miraculously feed five thousand.
 - (2). Walk on water.
 - (3). Restore sight to a blind man.
 - (4). Raise Lazarus from the dead.
 - c. Jesus' works truly speak for themselves.
4. And yet, despite the fact that Jesus had just healed a man of a thirty-eight-year-long paralysis, these blind, hard-hearted Pharisees still refused to accept that proof.

5. But, they we're merely rejecting Jesus, they were rejecting the work of the Father which He was doing through Jesus.
 - a. Jesus said: *"for the works which the Father has given Me to finish — the very works that I do — bear witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me."* **(John 5:36)**
 - b. Do you see how blind and hard-hearted these Pharisees were?
 - (1). If they admitted that Jesus had done the work of the Father in healing a man on the Sabbath, they would be forced to admit they had been wrong in their interpretation of the Sabbath Law.
 - (2). Their arrogant pride would forever keep them from admitting they were wrong.
 - (3). And there's a lesson in that for us. We should never be too proud to admit we're wrong, when the evidence of the Scriptures says we're wrong.
- D. But, if anyone felt the works of Jesus was somehow not sufficient testimony, then Jesus offered a fourth witness – the Scriptures.
 1. **John 5:39-44** – *"You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. 40 But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life. 41 I do not receive honor from men. 42 But I know you, that you do not*

have the love of God in you.

43 I have come in My Father's name, and you do not receive Me; if another comes in his own name, him you will receive. 44 How can you believe, who receive honor from one another, and do not seek the honor that comes from the only God?"

2. There's a message here for us as well.
 - a. The reason these rigid legalists couldn't see the deity of Jesus is because the love of God did not abide in them.
 - b. And without the love of God abiding in them, Jesus Christ could never become the object of their faith.
3. They callously refused to admit anything in the Scriptures that might prove the deity of Jesus.
 - a. There is an old saying, "None are so blind as those who refuse to see, nor so deaf as those who refuse to hear."
 - b. These Pharisees weren't blind. They blatantly refused to see.
 - (1). When it came to seeing the evidence in the Scriptures that pointed to Jesus, they were like little children who shut their eyes as tight as they could.
 - c. And they weren't deaf. They blatantly refused to hear.
 - (1). And when it came to hearing the testimony of the Old Testament prophets who spoke of Jesus, these

Pharisees were like little children who stopped up their ears.

- d. It's impossible to see or hear when your eyes are shut, and your ears are stopped up.
4. It sort of reminds me of the saying, "Don't confuse me with the facts, my mind is already made up!"
5. But don't think of the Scriptures as merely some religious document, some self-help book, or love letter.
 - a. The Scriptures are meant to draw us toward Jesus Christ.
 - b. But if you don't spend time immersed in the Word – if you don't read with open eyes and an open and receptive heart – then you will be no better than these spiritually blind, spiritually hearing impaired Pharisees.
 - c. The Word will no more dwell in you than it did in them.
6. If your faith in Jesus Christ is not as deep as it needs to be, then I can guarantee you're not spending as much time in the Word as you need to.
7. God's Word and your faith are inseparable.
- E. And finally, Jesus offers one more witness to testify to His deity – none other than Moses himself; the great Lawgiver.
 1. **John 5:45-47** – *"Do not think that I shall accuse you to the Father; there is one who accuses you — Moses, in whom you trust. 46*

For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote about Me. 47 But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?"

2. The Pharisees, who accused Jesus of being a Law-breaker by healing on the Sabbath, revered Moses as among the greatest of the heroes of the Jewish faith.
 - a. Moses was the great deliverer of the Jewish people from their Egyptian bondage.
 - (1). He was God's man – the man whom God had chosen to stand before Pharaoh and demanded the release of the Israelites from their slavery.
 - (2). He was also God's Law-giver – the man whom God had chosen to receive the Law engraved on tablets of stone on Mount Sinai.
 - (3). He was also God's prophet – the man through whom God spoke to the Israelites, which Moses wrote down in the first five books of the Bible: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.
3. And yet, these same Pharisees, who accused Jesus of being a Law breaker, believed they were the great defenders of the Jewish faith.

- a. To the devout Pharisee, the Law was God's greatest gift to the Jewish people. The Law was everything.
 - b. And that made Moses – as the Law-giver – among the greatest heroes of Judaism: right next to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph.
4. But Jesus must have shocked these narrow-minded, judgmental Pharisees to the core by telling them: **John 5:45** – *"Do not think that I shall accuse you to the Father; there is one who accuses you — Moses, in whom you trust."*
- a. In essence, Jesus was saying "I don't need to accuse you before the Father of ignoring the Scriptures – Moses, in whom you place all your trust, is the one accusing you of rejecting the Law and the prophets."
 - b. But how could that be?
 - c. Jesus had just told these Pharisees that the Scriptures testified of Him, but they didn't believe the Scriptures – even though the Pharisees claimed to be well-versed in the Scriptures.
 - d. And so, Jesus adds the final, fatal blow to the overblown, self-righteous egos of these judgmental Pharisees.

5. Despite the fact that these religious zealots claimed to put all their faith in Moses and the Law, Jesus said: **John 5:46-47** – *"For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote about Me. 47 But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?"*
6. What a shock that must have been for these Pharisees to hear Jesus tell them they didn't really believe Moses after all – for if they did, they would also believe in Jesus of whom Moses wrote!
7. But where did Moses say anything about Jesus?
 - a. **Deuteronomy 18:15, 19** – *"The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear. . . 19 And it shall be that whoever will not hear My words, which He speaks in My name, I will require it of him."*
8. But how do we know Jesus is *"the prophet"* of whom Moses wrote? Just listen to the words of Peter in Acts 3, where he quotes from this same passage in Deuteronomy.
 - a. **Acts 3:18-24** – *"But those things which God foretold by the mouth of all His prophets, that the Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled. 19 Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, 20 and that He may send*

Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before,

21 whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began. 22 For Moses truly said to the fathers, 'The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear in all things, whatever He says to you.

23 And it shall be that every soul who will not hear that Prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.' 24 Yes, and all the prophets, from Samuel and those who follow, as many as have spoken, have also foretold these days."

- b. Peter said Moses and all the prophets – from Samuel and those who follow – have spoken of these things. They have all spoken about Jesus.
- c. But it was Moses who said, *"The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear in all things, whatever He says to you. 23 And it shall be that every soul who will not hear that Prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people."*

- 9. We're not told the reaction of the Pharisees upon hearing this scathing rebuke by Jesus.

- a. But I can only imagine they must have been stunned into silence as their bitterness and hatred toward Jesus reached its zenith.
- b. They would not stop pursuing Jesus until He was dead and buried.

CONCLUSION:

- I. So, if you were sitting on the jury listening to the testimony of these six witnesses, what would your verdict be?
 - A. Is Jesus who He claimed to be – the Son of the Living God? Or is He merely an imposter – a fake, wanna-be Messiah?
 1. You weigh the evidence and render a verdict.
 2. But keep in mind that the verdict you reach about Jesus Christ has eternal consequences.
 - B. The verdict you reach about Jesus Christ is, quite literally, a matter of life or death – *your* life, or *your* death.
 1. Remember, Jesus had previously told these Pharisees: **John 5:24** – *"Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life."*
 2. And now, Jesus tells these Pharisees: **John 5:40** – *"But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life."*

3. So, what about you?
 - a. Are you willing to hear the words of Jesus and believe in God who sent Jesus – so that you can have everlasting life?
 - b. Or are you not willing to come to Jesus, and therefore be denied of life?
 - c. Your answer to that question depends on whether or not you truly believe Jesus is who He claimed to be.
- C. Don't be like these blind, hard-hearted Pharisees.
 1. Come to Christ in faith, repenting of your sins, confessing your faith in Him, and be baptized into Christ for the remission of your sins.
 2. Or come back to Christ in faith, repenting of your sins, confessing your sins to God, and be restored once again as His faithful disciple.
 3. The decision you make right now is truly a decision that will, quite literally, determine your eternity – either everlasting life or eternal death and separation from God.
 4. The choice is yours.