

Dr. Jerry Nelson

Witnesses for Jesus

1. (V. 5:31) Who is speaking and to whom is he speaking?

In John 5:18 it says the Jews (religious leaders) were trying all the harder to kill Jesus. Because they were under Roman rule, the Jews could not put Jesus to death without a legal case. Why might 8:14 not be a contradiction of 5:31? (Consider that Jewish law did not accept self-testimony.)

Who are the four witnesses to Jesus that he specifies in verses 31-39? (33, 36, 37, 39)

2. (V. 5:32) Who is the "another" of this verse – is it John (the Baptist) or the Father?

Considering the statement in 5:31, how would this person's testimony be valid?

3. (V. 5:33) Comparing John 5:18 and John 1:19 with 5:33; Who is the "you" of 5:33?

John 1:19-27 and John 3:25-30 are John the Baptist's testimony. What does Jesus say of John's testimony?

4. (V. 5:34) If verses 31-33 have been about legal testimony, what does Jesus mean when he says he doesn't "accept human testimony"? (5:36 might be relevant)

How could John's testimony aid in their (the Jews') salvation?

5. (V. 5:35) Cf. Mark 1:4-5 and John 3:23 – In what way had the Jews chosen for a time to enjoy John's light?

In what way did John (the Baptist) give light (cf. 1:23)?

6. (V. 5:36) What testimony about Jesus is "weightier" than John the Baptist's testimony?

What are several aspects of the "work" Jesus was given to finish? Compare John 4:34, John 17:4, John 1:17 and John 19:30.

To what do these works testify?

7. (V. 5:37-38) John doesn't mention Jesus' baptism but the other gospels do (cf. Matthew 3:16-17). How does that event relate to the Father's testimony concerning Jesus?

The last part of verse 37 is difficult to understand because how could the Father's words bear testimony to Jesus if they cannot be heard?

Verse 38 could appear to be a bit circular in its reasoning – you don't believe because you don't accept the testimony of the Father, but the Father's word doesn't dwell or abide in you because you don't believe. What might Jesus mean here?

8. (V. 5:39-40) In all of their study of the Scriptures (OT) what point and response did the Jews miss? Cf. Luke 2:25-32 for a man who did see Jesus in the Scriptures. Cf. Luke 24:25-27 for Jesus' own commentary on the Scriptures (OT).

9. (V. 5:41) How might 5:34a help us understand this statement by Jesus?

10. (V. 5:42) To better understand this passage, please refer to John 2:23-25.

11. (V. 5:43) What disappointment, through comparison, does Jesus express here?

12. (V. 5:44) What praise from each other might these Bible scholars (5:39) be accepting?

What indictment is Jesus making? (Cf. John 12:42-43 and Matthew 10:28)

13. (V. 5:45) Again compare 5:39 where the Mosaic law was the *sine qua non* (without which not) of their relationship with God. The person of Moses and the OT scriptures are here used synonymously. On what had the Jews set their hope?

Again comparing 5:39-40, what is Jesus' indictment of them?

14. Considering the entire passage of 5:31-47:
Cf. 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12 and Romans 1:21-32 for a description of wanton disregard for the truth.

15. Looking at all of 5:31-47, how do 5:34 and 5:40 put some hope into this otherwise scathing indictment by Jesus?

Reflection Questions

What leads you to believe the credibility of a witness? How do you know that they are telling the truth, or providing accurate testimony?

God testified to the authenticity of Jesus through the scriptures, through Simeon, John the Baptist, and his audible words as Jesus was baptized (just to name a few). To the Jews, why was the testimony of God himself implausible? Why is the same true today?

Jesus said that we can search the scriptures to find eternal life and still not find it. Why does knowledge alone fall short? What is the difference between knowing “about” God and “knowing” God?

If Jesus were influenced to change his mission or focus because of the praise of men, would he cease to be God? Why or why not?

The Jews who put their trust in God feared the retribution of the Jewish leaders. How are we, today, silenced by those who are hostile to the gospel?

If you are not currently in a Small Group, we encourage you to discuss your reflection questions with a family member or a close friend. Previous lessons are available on-line at www.sgc.org/John.

If you would like to be part of a Small Group, please contact Dori Sear at dsear@sgc.org

