
Day 1

Learn: Recall that Jesus had just healed a paralytic, was talking with the religious leaders about his authority and identity, and had just finished explaining his relationship with God the Father. Prayerfully read John 5.31-35. Because of what Jesus was claiming – that he was divine and in complete unity with God the Father – if he had only his own self-attestation to these claims then they would have to be false [v.31]. But Jesus says he has another witness: God the Father [vv.32, 37], who has testified about Jesus' identity as the messianic Son of God through the Old Testament scriptures, through John the Baptist, and through the works he gave Jesus to do. Jesus could not rely on human testimony, because [again] if he did not have God the Father's testimony to support his claims, then he surely was a fraud [v.34]. But God sent John the Baptist to testify about Jesus, as John did, to the crowds and the religious leaders [John 1.19-36]. The Greek verb tense suggests that the effects of John's testimony were still being felt when Jesus was speaking [v.33]. Obviously, one reason God raised up the prophet was because people might believe in John's testimony, and thus would have saving faith in Jesus [v.34]. The verb translated in v.35 as "rejoice" [NASB; NET; ESV; NKJV], "enjoy" [NIV], or "be excited" [NLT], ἀγαλλιάω [ah-gahl-lee-AH-oh], means to be exceedingly joyful, to exult. So Jesus said that his audience reacted wildly to John's teaching about the Messiah coming, but then the excitement died down; they recognized John as a prophet, yet in the end did not accept his witness of Jesus as the Messiah/Christ.

Reflect: We have enough early church manuscript evidence and knowledge of translating biblical Greek into English that we can be confident our English New Testament is highly accurate to the original. The New Testament provides many witnesses to the life, teachings, ministry, miracles, and identity of Jesus. John the Baptist prepared the people for Jesus' coming [John 1.23]. Matthew and John [apostles of Jesus] and Luke and Mark [disciples of apostles] all wrote accounts [named after them] about what happened when Jesus was here. Paul attested that Jesus appeared to over five hundred people after his resurrection from the dead, and that many of those people were still available for fact checking at the time Paul wrote [1 Corinthians 15.4-8]. The people who wrote the New Testament and the people about whom they wrote all could testify not only with words but with complete life change, such that they went from intimidated to fearless, from prideful to humble, from selfish to selfless, from sin-addled to Christ-like. You might know people who go to church but show no life change, but chances are you know of authentic believers who can testify to the powerful change God has worked in them since they accepted Christ and his gospel in faith. How convincing are these human witnesses? Are there ways in which they cannot satisfy your doubts or questions? How well do you believe that they are telling the truth about Jesus? Do you merely get caught up in the excitement of church or is your faith in Christ one that will last because you absolutely put your trust in his deliverance from sin and condemnation?

Day 2

Learn: Prayerfully read John 5.36. Jesus has a more important witness than John the Baptist: God the Father, who testified about Jesus in several ways, including giving Jesus specific things to accomplish while on Earth. Jesus' works were revealing in four ways: they were miraculous, in the power of God; they were fulfillment of scriptural prophecies; they pointed to the redemptive work he would do on the cross; and they were consistent with the heart of God. John wrote that he wrote this whole book about the "signs" Jesus was performing so that the readers would believe in Christ and thus be saved [20.30-31]. These "signs" were miracles Jesus was doing to show partial fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies so as to point to his identity as the Messiah and to his complete fulfillment of the prophecies when he would return. Remember, Jesus had just healed a lame man [5.8-9]: the evidence to support what Jesus was saying was before their eyes, but they were choosing to prosecute and persecute Jesus instead of rejoicing in his miracles and presence.

Reflect: Jesus' heritage, birthplace, miraculous conception and birth by a virgin, humanity and divinity, announcement by the prophet John the Baptist, specific miracles, sufferings, sacrificial death for our sins, and resurrection were all in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies given hundreds of years before Jesus walked the Earth. How convincing is this evidence to you that Jesus is who he says he is, the Messiah/Christ and Son of God? Why would you doubt this evidence? There are many false teachers, false prophets, and even false claims to be the savior or Messiah today, and some of these people might have powers to do things that amaze us, but they cannot fulfill the prophecies of Scripture like Jesus did. Why does this matter? How can you separate out the phony from the true?

Day 3

Learn: Prayerfully read John 5.37-47. God the Father testified about Jesus throughout the Old Testament, not just in the prophetic books. The scriptural testimony about Jesus includes prophecy, but also typology [a kind of foreshadowing, in

which something or someone exemplifies an aspect of Christ], revelatory events, and statutes of the Law that anticipate Christ. In a sense, all that Moses wrote could be about Christ, because one who would correctly understand what Moses wrote would recognize the true Christ when he came. No doubt Jesus shocked the religious leaders when he said that Moses was accusing them before God the Father. These religious leaders were scholars of the Old Testament, especially of the first five books, the Law of Moses. The Law should have convicted them of their sin and of their need for a Messiah-Savior, but instead they became proud and legalistic. Jesus said that if they could not believe [meaning “understand and absorb so as to obey”] what Moses taught, then they could not be expected to believe in him. Turning it around, since Jesus is the fulfillment of all preceding revelation, to disbelieve in him is compelling evidence that they did not understand the Old Testament, even though they had studied it. Their studies had led to having more knowledge about the scriptures, but it had led them into thinking knowledge or legalistic obedience would result in salvation. The scriptures cannot give life if we do not understand that they testify about Jesus, the one who actually can give life. They were studying the scriptures in the hope of gaining acceptance by God, which was a teaching of one of the great Rabbis of the day, Hillel. What they failed to perceive was that the true purpose and content of the scriptures was to point to Christ as the way of gaining acceptance by God. The religious leaders did not believe in Jesus, proving they did not have the Word of God in them; perhaps the reason they did not believe in Jesus was because they did not have the Word of God in them. Because of their lack of faith in the promised deliverer, they were not saved.

Reflect: Jesus said the religious leaders had not grasped the importance of the Old Testament revelation, in which God the Father had testified about the coming Messiah. How well do you know the Old Testament? Prayerfully consider reading one chapter [about one page] a day of the Old Testament in a good study Bible with a modern translation, so that you can become more familiar with how it all points to Jesus and the work he would do on the cross. [Note, if you have not yet read all of the New Testament, you should do that first, because it is more directly relevant to Christian living and more directly revelatory about Christ.] When are you willing to start these daily readings? There are free study aids available on the internet if you get confused, at www.soniclight.com, www.bible.org, and other good Christian websites. You also can ask your pastor or small group leader for help.

Day 4

Learn: Prayerfully read John 5:31-47. Jesus did not need praise from people, and he was not arguing with these religious leaders in order to convince them to honor him [v.41]. He knew that they were people who did seek praise from other people, and that they sought this type of praise rather than praise from God the Father for doing God’s will [v.44]. They did not have the love of God in them [v.42]. The Greek phrase could mean they were not loved by God, but more likely in this context Jesus was saying that they did not love God; rather they loved the darkness instead of the light, they mistreated the scriptures instead of letting the scriptures guide them, they sought honor in society instead of from God, and they rejected the Son of God and Messiah/Christ whom God the Father had sent to them. The fact that they sought praise from people made them vulnerable to human manipulation by false teachers and false prophets, people who would flatter them, have influence, and speak with eloquence. The religious leaders would identify with such a person and believe in him, but could not believe in Christ who reflected God the Father’s character, did God the Father’s work and mission, and was God the Son himself.

Reflect: The religious leaders believed in the existence of God the Father and in his promise to send a Messiah, but they did not really love God because they loved the darkness. Consider the amount of time you devote to worshipping God and studying his Word, your obedience to not commit acts of sin and to do what scripture asks: how much does your lifestyle give evidence that your love for God is real? The religious leaders worked for the admiration and praise of people more than for that of God. What about you, what are you after? There is nothing wrong with desiring acceptance, affection, and respect, but can you see what is wrong with having those as goals instead of seeking God’s righteousness?

Day 5

Learn: Between the content of John 5 and the content of John 6, a lot of time elapsed, during which the following events occurred [which are recorded in Matthew, Mark, and/or Luke]: Jesus preached the Sermon on the Mount; Jesus sent out his twelve apostles on their first mission; John the Baptist lost his head [literally]; the religious leaders accused Jesus of being empowered by Satan; Jesus accepted the rejection of Israel and rejected Israel as a nation in turn; Jesus began to teach in parables; and Jesus began focusing on preparing his apostles for taking over the ministry when he was gone.

Reflect: John excluded these events, because he was focused on one thing: showing the progression of Jesus’ signs to prove his identity as the Messiah/Christ and Son of God. The other gospel writers had the same goal of revealing Jesus’ identity, but relied more on other supporting themes. John really emphasizes Jesus’ divinity. Today, many people doubt Jesus could have been both divine and human. What can you do to prepare yourself to defend this biblical teaching?