

3.1

THIRTY-EIGHT YEARS

TRUTH ABOUT GOD

Jesus is God in flesh.

TRUTH FOR MY LIFE

I will be a witness
and testify that
Jesus is who He said
He is.



FOCUS VERSE: John 5:36

But I have greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me.

LESSON TEXT: John 5:1-47



BIBLICAL OVERVIEW

Lesson Text: John 5:1-47

In John 5 Jesus went to a place known for healing, and He caused healing to occur. Who would have guessed this healing would cause such a ruckus. If the man with a disability had been healed in the water of Bethesda in the customary way, perhaps no one would have cared. However, the onlooking Jews had limited their expectations of the supernatural so much that when God Himself arrived incarnate, they rejected His healing, saving power.

Strangely, the onlooking Jews reacted in anger. They had multiple complaints: a man carried his cot on the Sabbath (5:9-10), Jesus performed healing on the Sabbath (5:16, 18), and Jesus called God His Father, associating Himself with deity (5:17-18). They were so passionate about these issues that they wanted to kill Jesus. Their views of God and religion were so skewed that healing was considered a sin, yet homicidal anger was acceptable.

Jesus' lengthy response further demonstrated how flawed their religious beliefs were. In a fiery rebuttal, Jesus showed how their obsession with minutia seemed ridiculous in the light of eternity; they should have been concerned with the salvation of souls, not with rules concerning carrying a cot. Sadly while they obsessed over unimportant matters, they missed the weightier aspects of Scripture, such as those who looked forward to the coming of the Messiah. The whole of Scripture is Christocentric; the entire Bible revolves around and points toward Christ. (See John 5:39.)

The prevailing concept of John 5 revolves around that of the witness. The Jews witnessed Jesus' healing and responded with anger and condemnation. However, Jesus demonstrated that John the Baptist, the patriarch Moses, and even God the Father bore witness to His truth and rightness. Therefore, the implied question is posed to the reader: whose witness will you believe? Furthermore, with whose witness will you join yours?

JESUS SHOWED HOW THEIR OBSESSION
WITH MINUTIA SEEMED RIDICULOUS IN THE
LIGHT OF ETERNITY.

DAY 1

John 5:2-3, 5-7

² Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep market a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches.

³ In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water.

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⁵ And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years.

⁶ When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, he saith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole?

⁷ The impotent man answered him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me.

Biblical Insight

By performing a miracle near a site known for miracles, Jesus subverted onlookers' expectations and demonstrated Himself as being more powerful than the waters of Bethesda, a location widely known as a healing center. The man with the disability responded to Jesus in an interesting way as well. When Jesus asked if he wanted to be healed, the man responded with excuses for why he had not already been healed in the water. He assumed Jesus was referring to the pool; he did not expect Jesus Himself to be offering healing.

Daily Devotion

According to psychologists, the primary way humans react to experiencing shame and guilt is to make excuses. Excuses shift the blame from one source that can impact our self-esteem to a less central source. But making excuses leads us away from learning from those feelings of guilt and shame. Instead of taking the time to examine why we feel guilty when we forget a friend's birthday or why we feel shame for a certain behavior, excuses allow us to avoid self-examination. Making excuses hinders us from learning from our mistakes and correcting our wrongdoing.

Take some time to journal different excuses you have made in your relationship with God and in your relationships with others. What lessons were you avoiding by making excuses?

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

DAY 2

John 5:8-11

⁸ Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk.

⁹ And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked: and on the same day was the sabbath.

¹⁰ The Jews therefore said unto him that was cured, It is the sabbath day: it is not lawful for thee to carry thy bed.

¹¹ He answered them, He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up thy bed, and walk.

Biblical Insight

The Jewish establishment's response when they observed the healed man carrying his cot is almost humorous. Their first instinct was not to rejoice for the healing but to chastise the man for carrying his cot. Even carrying a cot was considering "working" on the Sabbath and was a breach of the Law (*Apostolic Study Bible*, note for John 5:8-9). Perhaps Jesus' command to pick up the bed and start working was deliberate. Jesus may have wanted to demonstrate He was greater than any sickness and also any petty, unbiblical rules put in place by the current religious rulers.

Daily Devotion

In 1853, thousands of men, referred to as "navvies," arrived on the Sydenham hills in London to build the Crystal Palace. Victorian society regarded the navvies as reckless brutes, but Catherine Marsh saw them as people in need of Christ. One Sunday, Catherine asked a group of navvies if they had ever been to church. The men said they never attended church because they assumed God would be angry with them since Christians were always angry with them. Over the years, as Catherine shared the gospel and the love of Jesus, navvies came to know and serve Jesus.

The Pharisees were much like the Victorian elites. The Pharisees treated others in a way contrary to God's nature to make themselves appear righteous. Because of their behavior, people were hindered from knowing God.

Take time to reflect on the way you treat others. Is it reflective of God's nature, or are your actions misrepresenting God to a world who desperately needs Him?

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

DAY 3

John 5:18–22

¹⁸ Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God.

¹⁹ Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.

²⁰ For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth: and he will shew him greater works than these, that ye may marvel.

²¹ For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will.

²² For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son:

Biblical Insight

The fact that Jesus had to defend the healing of the disabled man once again demonstrated how distorted the religious beliefs of that era were. Jesus tried to put their angry response into perspective by looking forward to the end times. The listening Jews should have been concerned with the salvation of souls who would spend eternity with God in Heaven or in condemnation in Hell (John 5:24). Where someone will spend eternity should be of higher importance than someone picking up his bedding (*Apostolic Study Bible*, note for John 5:24–30).

Daily Devotion

On the morning of May 19, 1780, the sky grew dark as night throughout most of New England. Though historians now believe the darkness was a result of fog, smoke from forest fires, and cloud cover, New England citizens considered the potential of end times. Commerce, farming, and daily chores halted as concerned citizens took to the streets, speculating whether the end of time had come. While citizens were in the streets pondering whether the Day of Judgment had arrived, the Connecticut legislature was in session. When a motion was made to adjourn because of the darkness, Mr. Abraham Davenport arose and said, “The day of judgment is either approaching, or it is not. If it is not, there is no cause of an adjournment: if it is, I choose to be found doing my duty.”

We are not guaranteed tomorrow. God could rapture His church, or we could take our last breath. When this life ends, will you be found doing your duty as a disciple of Jesus?

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

DAY 4

John 5:32-33, 36-38

³² There is another that beareth witness of me; and I know that the witness which he witnesseth of me is true.

³³ Ye sent unto John, and he bare witness unto the truth.

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³⁶ But I have greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me.

³⁷ And the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me. Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape.

³⁸ And ye have not his word abiding in you: for whom he hath sent, him ye believe not.

Biblical Insight

Since the Jews were highly concerned with the Law, Jesus began to speak in legal terms to persuade them. Deuteronomy 19:15 dictated that multiple witnesses were necessary for claims to be considered valid. By invoking the witnesses of John the Baptist (whom the people had followed and greatly respected) and the Father, Jesus established a firm legal case for His truth and authority. John's witness was established through his word, but the Father's witness had been established through the miraculous, affirming miracles performed through Jesus.

Daily Devotion

For many engaged couples, the list of pre-wedding tasks is lengthy, including cake tasting, choosing wedding attire, and planning decor. While the cake, clothes, and decorations are memorable parts of a wedding, to make a marriage legal, the marriage license must be signed. In many states, the officiant and a ceremony witness or two must sign. For someone to be considered a witness, that person must be physically present to watch the signing of the marriage license. If anything should happen to the license, the witnesses can be called upon to confirm the marriage.

As Christians, we are called to be witnesses of Jesus. Have you been present when Jesus has healed, delivered, saved, restored, or provided? If so, you must share what you have seen and experienced. Your witness account may be the confirmation someone needs to hear.

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

DAY 5

John 5:39, 45-47

³⁹ Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.

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⁴⁵ Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust.

⁴⁶ For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me.

⁴⁷ But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?

Biblical Insight

Jesus' legal argument concluded with a stunning accusation of those listening. He accused them of not understanding the Scriptures they loved to quote because the Scriptures pointed to Jesus. Furthermore, since they clearly didn't respect Jesus, He invoked the authority of one they did respect: Moses. If they had spent less time making up rules about carrying a cot and more time studying Moses' hope for the coming prophetic figure, they would have recognized Jesus as the fulfillment of Moses' prophecy. (See Deuteronomy 18:15, 18.) No wonder the onlookers misunderstood Jesus. They even misunderstood the very Scriptures they claimed to uphold.

Daily Devotion

Every day Shiloh came home from kindergarten and proudly showed his parents his classwork. On each paper his handwriting was atrocious. Letters were too big, lines were not straight, and circles did not look like circles.

At the parent-teacher meeting, his teacher extolled the things she enjoyed about Shiloh. She then declared, "I am also glad to have a fellow left-handed writer in class. Being left-handed, it is easier to teach him writing."

Shiloh's parents looked at the teacher in shock and said, "Shiloh is not left-handed. He has always been right-handed." Shiloh knew how to write, but he was doing it wrong, mimicking the teacher.

Like Shiloh and the Pharisees, we can know something but fail to do it correctly. We can know how to live for God but fail to do it. In reflection, what are some Scriptures you know but fail to live fully?

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*
