



International Bible Study Commentary

Verse-by-Verse Bible Lessons Thru the Bible

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John 5:30-38 Commentary New Revised Standard Version

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further follow the verse-by-verse [*International Bible Study Commentary*](#). **Study Hints for Discussion and Thinking Further** will help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion: these hints are available on the *International Bible Study Commentary* website along with the *International Bible Lesson* that you may want to read to your class as part of your Bible study. You can discuss each week's commentary and lesson at the [*International Bible Study Forum*](#).

(John 5:30) “I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge; and my judgment is just, because I seek to do not my own will but the will of him who sent me.

In John 5:29, Jesus said that He would make the final judgment of people when He raised everyone from their graves: “those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.” He affirmed that He would not do this on His own. As a matter of fact, Jesus humbly declared that He could do nothing on His own. He and the Father were

so united in all their goals, intentions, and purposes that He could and would do nothing without the Father's agreement and involvement. Jesus promised that He would judge as He heard; as He heard from His Father and as He heard the thoughts and words of those He judged. The thoughts and words of all He judged would reveal good intentions leading to good behavior and a good way of life or evil intentions leading to evil behavior and an evil way of life. Jesus also promised that His judgment is and would be just. Only God can see into the hearts of everyone to know the reasons for their actions, and Jesus can see into the hearts of everyone. God gave His Holy Law through Moses, and only God knows how people have obeyed and disobeyed His Law of Love, further defined in the Ten Commandments and applied by Jesus in His "Sermon on the Mount" in Matthew chapters 5-7. In our study of John 1:14-17, we learned that Jesus is "full of grace and truth" and "from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace." Therefore, Jesus' judgments are always loving, just, gracious, and merciful. Those wanting to kill Jesus were far from being loving, just, gracious, and merciful. Furthermore, unlike Jesus, they sought to do their own will, achieve their own purposes, maintain their own power, and cling to their wealth and position in the world. On the other hand, Jesus sought to do the will of God. Jesus knew the will of God, always thought according to the will of God, and always did the will of God. Knowing everyone completely, only God can make perfect judgments. As the only Son of God, Jesus

made and will always make perfect judgments according to the will of God.

In Deuteronomy 17:6, we learn, “On the evidence of two or three witnesses the death sentence shall be executed; a person must not be put to death on the evidence of only one witness.” Those sentenced to the resurrection of condemnation will have two witnesses against them, the Father and the Son. But no one needs to be sentenced to the resurrection of condemnation, “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life” (John 3:16).

(John 5:31) “If I testify about myself, my testimony is not true.”

When Jesus debated with the religious leaders, He used legal language they would understand. When Jesus said, “If I testify about myself, my testimony is not true,” He did not mean that He did not speak the truth about himself. Rather, according to Jewish law, if a person made claims about themselves and no one else confirmed their claims; then, their claims were unreliable. Later, the Jews were only too willing to follow the unconfirmed claims of false Messiahs. In John 8:17, Jesus discussed this legal principle when He told the religious leaders, “In your law it is written that the testimony of two witnesses is true.” Jesus was not the only one testifying about Him. Jesus had more than two witnesses testifying about Him. And the

witnesses Jesus would bring forth in John 5:32-47 testified to the truth of Jesus' words about himself.

(John 5:32) There is another who testifies on my behalf, and I know that his testimony to me is true.

The first witness Jesus brought forth was John the Baptist, though some believe that by "another" Jesus referred to His Father. In the preaching of John the Baptist, God the Father testified on behalf of Jesus as the Holy Spirit (Who indwelt John the Baptist before he was born) told the truth through John about Jesus and prepared people for the coming of Jesus as the Messiah. Jesus declared that He knew the testimony of John the Baptist was true, and Jesus knew the ultimate source of John's message was from the Father through the Holy Spirit.

(John 5:33) You sent messengers to John, and he testified to the truth.

Jesus reminded the religious leaders that they had sent representatives to question John the Baptist's credentials as a prophet. They had asked him why he was baptizing his fellow Jews. They had wanted to know if he was the Messiah. Jesus declared that John had told them the truth. John had baptized people to prepare them for His coming as the Messiah. In John 1:29, John the Baptist had pointed people to Jesus saying, "Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" John the Baptist was the first faithful human witness that Jesus could have called

upon to affirm that what Jesus said and did was according to the will of God.

(John 5:34) Not that I accept such human testimony, but I say these things so that you may be saved.

The truth that Jesus was the long-expected Messiah and the Son of God did not depend on John's human testimony alone. Jesus referred the Jews to John's human testimony that they might believe John and by believing John that they might repent of their sins, be baptized, and come to saving faith in Jesus as their Lord and Savior. Jesus' purpose in giving John's human testimony was not to save himself from death, but so others might learn the truth and be saved by believing in Him and the truths He came to reveal. One reason Christians give their human testimony about Jesus is so people can believe in Jesus and become children of God (John 1:12).

(John 5:35) He was a burning and shining lamp, and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light.

Jesus compared John to a lamp that burned; a lamp that depended on the fuel of God to keep burning and giving light, a lamp that eventually burned out when King Herod beheaded him according to God's perfect timing. The Jews delighted in John for a while. Some delighted in John when they turned from their sins and prepared themselves to meet Jesus. Others delighted in John because it had

been about four hundred years since God had sent a prophet to the Jews, and they were amazed to hear a true prophet. Some rejoiced when they heard John preach whether they repented or not. Before he killed John, even King Herod liked to hear John preach! In Mark 6:20, we read, “Herod feared John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and he protected him. When he heard him, he was greatly perplexed; and yet he liked to listen to him.” John was a lamp sent from God to prepare people to meet Jesus the Messiah. In John 1:7-8, we read about John, who himself was not the light, but a lamp: “He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light.”

(John 5:36) But I have a testimony greater than John’s. The works that the Father has given me to complete, the very works that I am doing, testify on my behalf that the Father has sent me.

After His own testimony about himself, Jesus had the word of a prophet, John the Baptist, for a second witness about Him. But as a third witness, Jesus told them that the works He was doing in their midst were a greater testimony than John’s testimony. Jesus was not doing works like a magician to impress people and thereby convince them that He was great and they should adore Him. Rather, Jesus was doing the works that God the Father had given Him to do. When Jesus healed the sick man on the Sabbath, He did a work that His Father wanted

Him to do. Jesus' works of compassion testified that the Father had sent Him. Rather than seeing Jesus as a man who broke the Sabbath when He healed someone or as a person who threatened their privileged place in society, Jesus insisted that they should have seen His works of loving power as evidence that the Father had sent Him and was testifying in His behalf.

(John 5:37) And the Father who sent me has himself testified on my behalf. You have never heard his voice or seen his form,

The Father sent His Son into the world, and He testified in His behalf by showing Jesus different signs that Jesus could work to help people that no mere human being could do. For example, though it may only take about two weeks to ferment a bottle of wine, it takes much longer than that to plant a grape vine, grow and harvest the grapes, and follow through all the processes to bottle a world class wine. Jesus made wine from water in less than a second, and the steward said it was the best wine. All things were made by Jesus in the beginning, so making wine for a wedding was no problem for Jesus (John 2:1-11). Even more spectacular than making the wine was Jesus' reason for doing so. He had compassion for a new groom and bride who would have suffered much embarrassment in their culture if they had run out of wine; so, He quietly worked a miracle in their behalf without drawing attention to himself. Jesus did what God the Father would do. The Jews who wanted to kill Jesus had never seen or heard the

voice of God, but God the Father testified in Jesus' behalf by what Jesus did to help others and by the loving way Jesus helped them. Still today, God the Father and God the Son work miracles in behalf of their children that most of us never recognize as testimonies to their love, justice, grace, and mercy.

(John 5:38) and you do not have his word abiding in you, because you do not believe him whom he has sent.”

John 5:38 leads into the last section of Jesus' confrontation with the Jewish leaders. In John 5:39-47, we will learn that in addition to God's acts in history and God's acts in the life and work of Jesus that God also testified in Jesus' behalf in the Scriptures (specifically, the Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament). The Jewish leaders studied the Scriptures, but they studied the Scriptures for the wrong reasons. They studied the Scriptures to learn ideas that would help them win debates among themselves. They studied the Scriptures in order to create laws and traditions that gave them a reason to be teachers, leaders, and judges over others. Hence, they used the Scriptures to devise all sorts of rules that bound people into a legal instead of into a loving relationship with God. In this sense, even though they might have known a lot of Bible quotes and rules, the word of God did not abide (remain) in them and influence their decisions and treatment of others. In some sense, as they studied and talked about the word of God, the word “went in one ear

and out the other” and never into their hearts to remain there. For example, in Deuteronomy 10:12-13, we read, “So now, O Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you? Only to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments of the LORD your God and his decrees that I am commanding you today, for your own well-being.” If God’s word had abided or remained in the leaders who wanted to kill Jesus, they would have loved the LORD and would have loved to serve the LORD with all their heart and soul. If the word of God had abided within the Jewish leaders, they would have practiced what the prophet Micah told them to do in Micah 6:8, “He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?” The Jewish leaders who condemned Jesus for healing a man on the Sabbath who had been ill for thirty-eight years knew nothing about justice, did not love to act kindly, and certainly did not walk humbly with God. If the word of God had abided within them, they would have done what God required of people, and they would have treated the man Jesus healed (and Jesus himself) with justice, with kindness, and with the humility that people needed to learn from Jesus and what Jesus’ signs testified about Jesus and His relationship with God. If the word of God had abided within them, then the word of God within them would have testified to their hearts and minds that Jesus’ acts

and words were the acts and words of God who had sent Him into the world.

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. What are some of the actions that Jesus can take without consulting His Father?
2. What did Jesus mean when He said His testimony about himself was not true?
3. Who did Jesus say truly testified about Him?
4. Why did Jesus refer people to the human testimony of others? Why do we tell others about Jesus?
5. What and/or who did Jesus say was a greater testimony than John's testimony?

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