

## 21. Jesus' five witnesses

February 13, 2011

Mark Lane requested to be an attorney of an accused man who got killed even before he was refused by the Warren Commission. However, he still got the results.

His client? Lee Harvey Oswald, accused assassin of President John F. Kennedy. But while he was requesting to be Oswald's defense, he, too, was shot and killed. Another attorney might have walked away from the case, but not Mark Lane. In fact, he worked harder than ever to prove that Oswald had not acted alone in the presidential assassination plot.

Lane documented his findings in the best-selling book 'Rush to Judgment.' The facts, interviews, and pictures he gathered cast a convincing shadow of doubt over the single-assassin theory. So influential was the book that public opinion shifted, causing 69 percent of the people polled to disagree with the Warren Commission's report that a lone assassin was responsible for the president's death.

Why was the single-assassin theory questioned? How was the public swayed? Through the use of key witnesses.

In a similar manner, Jesus brought in five key witnesses to His defense when the Pharisees accused Him of being a Sabbath Commandment breaker and a blasphemer of God by pretending to be One.

### A. OPENING STATEMENT

*John 5:31 "If I bear witness of Myself, My witness is not true.*

Last week we learned that Jesus claimed to be the Son of God by saying "My Father." Of course, the Jewish religious leaders clearly understood that He meant to be equal with God and God Himself in v17 and 18.

However, Jesus knew that His own testimony about Himself couldn't be established due to the law of God given through Moses in Deuteronomy 19:15, which says by the mouth of two or three witnesses the matter shall be established.

So Jesus doubled the witnesses, providing five witnesses to the religious leaders and presenting an air tight case. We must remember that we can never outdo and outsmart God.

By the way, the word 'witness' is one of the key words in John's Gospel. It is used forty-seven times.

### B. THE FIRST WITNESS – JOHN THE BAPTIST

*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.*

Jesus calls John the Baptist to the witness stand as His first witness. John the Baptist knew who Jesus was as His forerunner and faithfully declared what he knew to the people of Israel. John told the people that Jesus was the Lord, the Lamb of God, and the Son of God.

*John 1:23 He said: "I am 'The voice of one crying in the wilderness: "Make straight the way of the Lord,"" as the prophet Isaiah said."*  
*John 1:29 The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"*  
*John 1:34 And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God."*

John the Baptist was the burning and shining lamp; and Jesus was the Light of the world. Yet because of the shallow spiritual depth of the people, they ignored John's divinely appointed message about the Savior and didn't repent.

### **C. THE SECOND WITNESS – THE MIRACULOUS WORKS OF JESUS**

*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.*

Miracle is a supernatural intervention of God in which He interrupts natural laws for His own sovereign purpose. In other words, if we can explain the method, it is not a miracle. It is rare and when it happens, the result is immediate and complete, no waiting period, nor half way done.

Please don't think that the Lord should perform miracles so that unbelievers can put their faith in Him. The Israelites in the wilderness had seen miracles forty years non-stop, yet they didn't trust Him; Judas followed Jesus for three years, yet he became a traitor.

You have to wonder if the religious leaders of Jesus' time ever have noticed His miracles. Yes, they did, but they chose to ignore them, because they didn't fit in with their ideas of the Messiah's miracles. Because their idea of messiah would be the one who liberate them from the iron fist of Rome.

### **D. THE THIRD WITNESS – GOD THE FATHER**

*John 5:32 There is another who bears witness of Me, and I know that the witness which He witnesses of Me is true.*

*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.*

Jesus calls His third witness to the stand – God the Father Himself.

Let's go back to v32. I asked you to underline the word 'another' here. It is very important word for us to understand in Greek, because it really adds color and a deeper meaning to it.

Please allow me to explain:

Notice how Jesus introduces the Father: "There is another." The word 'another' in the Greek is 'allos,' and means "another of the same kind." In the meanwhile, 'heteros' means "another of a different kind." In light of this distinction of the meaning, Jesus was pointing to His Father in heaven as "another of the same kind as myself" which leads to Christ's unique unity with the Father.

I also asked you to note "bear witness." The Greek word for this is 'martyreo.' The Greek tense is 'Present' which indicates continual action. The Father continually testi-

fies to the claims of Christ. At Jesus' birth, the Father announced the arrival with prophets, angels, and a miraculous star. At Jesus' baptism, the Father testified: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased" in Matthew 3 and later reaffirmed His own testimony at the Mount of Transfiguration in Matthew 17. And now the Father declares His Son Jesus through His Word the Bible.

Now I'd like all of you to go back to v38, please.

*John 5:38 But you do not have His word abiding in you, because whom He sent, Him you do not believe.*

These rulers are guilty because they do not abide in Scripture that God gave them. This brings a very important point for all of us to take heed. It is worse for a believer who knows what the Bible says about a certain thing that he or she is about to do, but still disobeys the Lord because of one's carnal desires than the one who simply doesn't know what the Bible says about it.

I can just tell some of you are thinking, "Pastor, that is why I don't want to read the Bible and memorize the weekly Scriptures. It is better for me being ignorant in the Word and not doing it than knowing it and disobeying it, huh?" Wise guy?!?!?

No, how about this? You memorize the weekly Scriptures and read the Bible daily and obey what the Lord says. Wouldn't it please the Lord and bring honor to Him? That is what all of us are supposed to do.

## **E. THE FOURTH WITNESS – THE WORD OF GOD**

*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?*

One time I was listening to one of my spiritual mentors, pastor Chuck Swindoll's sermons, though he doesn't know me from Adam. He quoted a regretful comment of one of the graduates of Dallas Theological Seminary: "When I came to Dallas Theological Seminary, I was in love with Jesus; but as I am leaving now, I am in love with the text of the Bible."

Nothing wrong with expository in-depth study of the Bible. You know that I truly dig this and encourage all of you to do the same. But we have to understand the goal of our Bible studies – to get to know our Savior and Lord Jesus Christ intimately and obey what He teaches us through His Bible, not to be solely in love with the text of the Bible.

How sad it is for these Jewish religious leaders to know the Word of God, but they didn't know the God of the Word! They carefully counted every letter of the text, but they totally missed the spiritual truths that Scripture contained.

It has been said, "It is not how much you go through the Bible, but how much the Bible goes through your heart and life."

These Jewish religious leaders' selfish and prideful attitude toward God's Word hindered their faith in Him, but also did their attitude toward themselves and one another.

er. The Pharisees enjoyed being honored by men and did not seek to honor the Lord alone.

This time I'd like to draw your attention to v43:

*John 5:43 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.*

Because they rejected the true Son of God who came in the Father's name, they would one day accept a false messiah, the antichrist, who would come in his own name.

*2 Thessalonians 2:3-5 Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, 4 who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. 5 Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things?*

Jesus prophesies the coming day when the Jewish people will, for a time, embrace the antichrist who comes in his own name. Anytime a person rejects Jesus, it leaves them open to tremendous deception.

By the way, if you have a chance to ask a messianic question to any orthodox Jews regarding how to identify the true Messiah, they will answer something like this: "We will know him, because he will bring peace in the Middle East and will build the temple for us on the Temple Mount."

## **F. THE FIFTH WITNESS – MOSES**

*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?"*

As His trump card, Jesus pulls an ace out of the deck of Jewish heroes: Moses. Why Moses? Because, like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Moses was one of the founding fathers of Judaism. He spearheaded the Exodus, delivered God's Law to the people, and was looked up to with reverence. But when did Moses ever write of Christ? Turn back to the prophetic pages of Deuteronomy 18:

*Deuteronomy 18:15-16 "The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear, 16 according to all you desired of the Lord your God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, 'Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God, nor let me see this great fire anymore, lest I die.'*

The first idol of the Israelites who wandered around in the wilderness was not the golden calf, rather Moses. Today's orthodox Jews still hold Moses in the place of more reverence than God Himself as they did in Jesus' time. How do I come to this conclusion?

*Jude 9 Yet Michael the archangel, in contending with the devil, when he disputed about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!"*

Because the devil clearly understood that the dead body of Moses would deter people, especially the Israel people from worshiping one true God.

But how can we be sure Jesus was the prophet referred to by Moses? Let the Bible explain to us from Acts 3.

*Acts 3:18-23 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.'*

### **G. THE VERDICT: A SERIOUS CHOICE**

The witnesses have been carefully chosen. Each has taken the stand. The defense of Jesus was systematically delivered. Now the defense rests. As a member of the jury, you must deliberate. You must weigh the testimonies. It's a sobering decision, because the verdict you reach about Christ is a serious one. It is, quite literally, a matter of life or death – that is YOUR life or death.