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If You Believed Moses, You Would Believe Me John 5: 31-47

If you believed Moses, you would believe Me DIG: Who or what testifies in favor of Jesus? How do you think the Jewish leaders felt when Messiah referred to those witnesses? How did Yeshua throw their own Scriptures right back at them? Since they did not lack information, what was their problem with Christ?

REFLECT: What "witnesses" have convinced you that Jesus is indeed the One who gives life? How do you see the Jewish leaders' attitudes and misuse of Scripture reflected today? How can you use Scripture to cultivate the love of God in you?

If I testify on My own behalf, My testimony is not valid (John 5:31 CJB). The TaNaKh held that **self-testimony** without supporting **witnesses** could not be regarded as legally valid: **One witness alone will not be sufficient to convict a person of any offense or sin of any kind; the matter will be established only if there are two or three witnesses testifying against that person (Deuteronomy 19:15). The Mishnah records the teaching of the rabbis that none may be believed when he testifies of himself (Ketuboth 2.9). Jesus'** statement should be understood in the context of a Jewish court.[459] While **the Lord** had not yet been dragged in **front** of the Great Sanhedrin for questioning (**to see link click Lg – The Great Sanhedrin**), **He** was nevertheless on trial. It was in **the second stage of investigation** to determine if **Yeshua** was indeed **the Messiah**. **Therefore, Christ called five witnesses to testify on His behalf. Moses** said in **two or three witnesses** should something be established. So here, **Jesus** goes well beyond the demands of the Torah.

The first witness was John the Baptist. You have sent to Yochanan and he has testified to the truth. Not that I accept human testimony; but I mention it that you may be saved. Both the **I** and the **you** are emphatic. Few doubted that **the Baptizer** was a genuine prophet of **God (Matthew 14:5, 21:26; Mark 11:32; Luke 20:6)**. But, the excitement **he** stirred was only temporary. **He**

was **a lamp** and not **the light**; **he** was only a shadow, not **the Substance**; **he** was **the forerunner**, not **the Meshiach**. **John was a lamp that burned and gave light.** Here we see **John's** sub-theme of **light** and darkness. **And you chose for a time to enjoy his light (Yochanan 5:33-35)**, but ultimately **his** message would be rejected and **his Messiah** crucified.

The second witness was Jesus' authenticating miracles. But I have a testimony that is greater than Yochanan's. For the things the Father has given Me to do, the very things I AM doing now (like healing **an invalid** at **the pool at Bethesda**)**, testify on My behalf that the Father has sent Me (John 5:36 CJB).** The miracles that **Jesus** was performing were to authenticate **His** claims that **He** was **the Messiah** (see my commentary on **Isaiah GI – The Three Messianic Miracles**). **Jesus** invites those who do not have **His Word** staying within them to search **the Scriptures**, just as the Jews in Berea did later **(Acts 17:11)**.

The third witness was the Father Himself. But there is another who testifies on My behalf, and I know that His testimony about Me is valid (John 5:32). John, the human author of the gospel of **John**, in recording the Aramaic words of **Jesus**, could have chosen either of two Greek words for **another**, *allos* or *heteros*. The two words are basically synonymous with a slight nuance. Whereas *heteros* means *another of a different kind, allos* means *another of the same kind.* So when **the Lord** used *allos*, this **another** is, of course, **God the Father**.[460] Without denying the oneness of **the Trinity**, **Messiah** treated **the Father's** testimony as independent. If **His** opponents objected, they would have admitted that **Yeshua** and **the Father** were indeed of **One** essence. By failing to object, they had to receive the independent testimony of **El Shaddai** into evidence.

Check mate.

In addition, the Father who sent Me has Himself testified concerning Me. The Prophet of Nazareth was referring to the nine centuries of prophecy that **He** had fulfilled to the letter. **Messiah** even fulfilled things over which **He** had no control (humanly speaking), like the manner, time, and place of **His** birth **(Isaiah 7:14; Dani'el 9:25; Micah 5:2)**. **You have never heard His voice nor seen His form, nor does His Word dwell in you, for you do not believe the One He sent (John 5:37-38).** The main element of **God's testimony** is **His Word**.

The fourth witness was the TaNaKh. You keep searching the TaNaKh

because you think that in it you have eternal life. It's as if **Yeshua** issued a challenge, saying, "Go ahead, and search **the TaNaKh**." **His** point is twofold. First, **the Lord's** challenge anticipated the conclusion **His** enemies would reach if **they** dared take **the TaNaKh** at face value. If **they** were really honest, **the TaNaKh** would lead them to the conclusion that without question **Jesus** is **the Son of God**. Secondly, Rabbi Sha'ul tells us that **the Torah has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith (Galatians 3:24 NASB). The Torah** is a **tutor** because all 613 commandments are viewed as a unit and present an impossible standard. To break one is to break them all. The only person to ever keep all 613 perfectly is **the Meshiach**. The purpose of the Torah was to reveal the need for a **Savior**. The continued failure of trying to live up to an impossible standard should have prepared **their** hearts for the coming of **a Prophet like Moses** (see below). Instead, pharisaic Judaism took **ADONAI's** high, righteous standard and pulled it down to something they could actually do. This was **the Oral Law** (see **Lg – The Oral Law**). **And yet those very Scriptures bear witness of Me, yet you refuse to come to Me to have life (John 5:39-40 CJB). They** made **the Oral Law their** god.

Jesus supported **His** accusation by contrasting **His** motivation to **theirs**. Whereas, **He** doesn't seek the human approval (implying that **He** only seeks the approval of **the Father**), **they** sacrifice **their love of ADONAI** for the admiration of people. **I do not accept praise from men, but I know you. I know that you do not have the love of God in your hearts. I have come with My Father's authority, and you do not accept Me; but if someone else comes in his own name, you will accept him.** Our **Savior** then pointed to **their** ridiculous acceptance of rabbis who made a name for themselves, but rejected **the One** who glorified **the Father**. **How can you believe [in Me] since you accept glory from one another but do not seek the glory that only comes from God (Yochanan 5:41-44)?**



The fifth and last witness was Moshe. **Yeshua** saved for last the argument that would be the most meaningful to **His** hearers. **Moses** wrote of **Jesus (Luke 16:31, 24:44; Hebrews 11:26)**. Traditional Judaism denies this, but the early messianic Jews often based their case for **Yeshua's** messiahship on passages of **Scripture**, including those written by **Moshe**, such as **Genesis 49:10**; **Numbers 24:17** and **Deuteronomy 18:15-18**. Even within non-messianic Judaism all three of these are widely regarded as referring to **the Messiah**. Thus, says **Yeshua**, it is not even necessary for **Me** to make a special accusation because **Moses** has already done it. And if you don't believe **him**, why would you believe **Me**?[461]

But do not think I will accuse you before the Father. Your accuser is Moses, on whom your hopes are set. Moshe had written: **The LORD will raise up a prophet like [Moses] from among their fellow Israelites and I will put My words in His mouth. He will tell them everything I command Him. I Myself will call to account anyone who does not listen to My words that the Prophet speaks in My name (Deuteronomy 18:17-19)**. Consequently, **Jesus** said: **If you believed Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote about Me** (see my commentary on **Exodus Eq – Christ in the Tabernacle**)**. But since you do not believe what he wrote, how are you going to believe what I say (John 5:45-47)?** What had been **their** greatest privilege had become **their** greatest **accuser**. No one could condemn someone who never had a chance. **The TaNaKh**, however, had given the Israelites the knowledge to recognize **the Messiah** when **He** came. Therefore, the knowledge **they** had failed to use had convicted **them**. Responsibility is always the other side of privilege.

The problem was not insufficient evidence to **His** claims. The problem is seen in **verses 46** and **47**. Accusing the Jews of **not** believing in **Moses** seems to be a very

strange thing to say. If anybody believed in **Moses**, wouldn't it be the Jews? But, in reality, it was, and is true. The Jews of **Jesus'** day believed in **Moshe** as he had been interpreted through **the Oral Law**. Today, Orthodox Jews believe in **Moses** as the Oral Law, the Gemara and the Talmud have reinterpreted **him**. **They** don't believe in the **Moshe** of **the TaNaKh**. Because if **they** had accepted **Moses** as only **the TaNaKh** depicts **him**, **they** would have recognized that **Jesus** was **the Messiah**. Like the Roman Catholic Church, they substituted their traditions for **Scripture** with tragic results.

Consequently, what does it mean to keep the Sabbath holy?
It means to believe in the God of the Bible and not the traditions of men.

Despite this and other irrefutable evidence proving the deity of **Messiah**, pharisaic Judaism remained stubborn. **Jesus** gave two reasons for this. First, they didn't want to believe in **Him**, and secondly, they preferred their pride to salvation. They refused to take **their** hands off the steering wheel of **their** lives and let **Yeshua** take over.

As Chuck Swindoll relays to us in his commentary, *New Testament Insights on John*, we need to be on the lookout for such people today. Some are genuinely curious about **the Lord**, and their questions can become an opportunity to lead them to **Christ**. **Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect (First Peter 3:15).** But, don't be fooled. Not every debate about spiritual matters is prompted by curiosity; more often than not, religious debate is merely a deception of the rebellious (see my commentary on **Jude Ah – Godless People Have Secretly Slipped In Among You**). Just as the religious leaders did with **Jesus**, some will seek you out for no other purpose than to challenge the truth rather than to understand and believe.

It's part of a clever game they play with themselves. Their purpose for debating a believer is to pretend they have good reason to remain on their present course; if the believer cannot refute their objections or offer a compelling reason to believe in **Messiah**, they don't feel obligated to submit control of their lives to anyone else. If the truth were known, they cannot tolerate your firm belief that **God**, not themselves or humanity, really controls the destiny of the universe.

By the end of the debate, the believer feels exhausted and the rebel feels vindicated – at least for a while. Soon, however, the rebel compulsively starts

another debate with an unsuspecting believer. Here are a few ways to spot someone like this who wants to play “convert-me-if-you-can.”

1. The rebel challenges you with a negative opinion about **ADONAI**, or some other theological concern, and then expects you to talk him or her out of it (e.g. *God doesn’t care about people or He would end all suffering*).

2. The rebel presents a philosophical conundrum that has no definite answer (e.g. *What about the Pygmies who were never told about **God**?*).

3. The rebel presumes to judge the goodness of **God** by human standards, especially his or her own (e.g. *I can’t believe a loving **God** would send anyone to hell*).

4. The rebel tries to convince you that your faith is irrational, anti-academic, or that **God** doesn’t exist (e.g. *No thinking person believes that stuff anymore*).

5. The rebel shifts the conversation to another issue whenever you begin making headway on the first (e.g. *Well, where did Cain get his wife?*).

6. The rebel becomes frustrated, angry and belligerent and resorts to name-calling (you fill in the blanks here).

7. The rebel wants to compare qualifications or casts doubt on yours (e.g. *Oh yeah, well, where did you get your training?*).

If you suspect you’re in a debate with a rebel, politely end the conversation. You might even offer your reason for cutting it short. The temptation to continue can be enticing, but trust me – nobody has been argued into the Kingdom. At best, you can argue to a stalemate because, with a rebel (just as it was with the Pharisees), the challenge is not the intellect, it’s the will. If you must leave him or her with something, then let it be a testimony of your own experience. Few can refute that.

On the other hand, genuinely curious people listen rather than argue. They question rather than challenge. They are receptive and humble, not argumentative and arrogant. They accept that some questions cannot be answered adequately and they respect the occasional “I don’t know.” They respond positively to empathy, while rebels do not respond to compassion. And, best of all, with genuinely curious people, the conversation naturally flows into a presentation of the gospel. Not everyone acts upon the Good News right away, but those who want to know the

truth will at least hear it out without a fight. No conversation should feel exhausting. Refuse to participate in one that does.[462]