



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

The Tragic Diagnosis of Unbelief (John 5:30-47)

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One of the main thrusts of Capitol Commission is to encourage Christians in your districts to pray for your personal life, professional life and spiritual life. One way we do this is through our prayer blog, The Free State Prayer Slate at www.mdprays.wordpress.com lists several leaders each day that followers can lift to the Lord in prayer. What a privilege we have to speak to the Lord on your behalf!

Jesus addressed some leaders of his community at the end of the fifth chapter of John. What he firmly taught them is a lesson all of us need to hear today. Our eternal destiny depends on it.

I. THE DEPENDENCE OF JESUS (vv. 30-37)

A. FOR JUST JUDGEMENT

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

The core of Jesus' nature was his humility. The problem was that Israel's idea of the true Messiah would be a mighty military and political figure that would lead them to overthrow the oppressive Romans. As Jesus focused his words in this passage to the Jews who were seeking to persecute and kill him, he not only claimed equality with the Father, but paradoxically shows his humble nature that is dependent on the Father as well. The opportunity for harsh judgment here is tempered with a calm, confident display of just judgment because his judgment is rooted in and subservient to the will of the Father.

B. FOR TRUE TESTIMONY

John 5:31-37 - "If I alone bear witness about myself, my testimony is not deemed true. There is another who bears witness about me, and I know that the testimony that he bears about me is true. You sent to John, and he has borne witness to the truth. Not that the testimony that I receive is from man, but I say these things so that you may be saved. He was a burning and shining lamp, and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light. But the testimony that I have is greater than that of John. For the works that the Father has given me to accomplish, the very works that I am doing, bear witness about me that the Father

has sent me. And the Father who sent me has himself borne witness about me. His voice you have never heard, his form you have never seen,"

In the Old Testament, two witnesses were needed to convict someone of a crime. Jesus' testimony of himself wasn't enough for these Jews, so he points to three other proofs of his deity. John the Baptist, Jesus' own works and the testimony of his Father all point to the fact that Christ is the Son of God.

Notice the hierarchy of the testimony here. John the Baptist gave witness to Jesus, but Christ makes it clear that human testimony is not the foundation of truth. He essentially says, "If it helps you see the truth, fine, and human witness may lead you to salvation. But don't base your proof only on John's words." The words and works of the Father, which these Jews had already seen and heard, were greater than John's testimony and more reliable to serve as the basis of the deity of Jesus.

JESUS CLEARLY CLAIMED TO BE GOD BUT HIS AUDIENCE OF JEALOUS AND VIOLENT MEN HAD MADE UP THEIR MINDS NOT TO BELIEVE.

II. THE DOWNFALL OF MEN (vv. 38-47)

The next paragraph contains some of Jesus' most direct and harsh words to those who hated him. This passage moves through a list of several items that men can turn to for salvation rather than Christ. The message is made plain that depending on anyone or anything other than Jesus will not result in salvation, but separation from God.

A. SEARCHING SCRIPTURES, NOT FOR CHRIST

John 5:38-40 - and you do not have his word abiding in you, for you do not believe the one whom he has sent. You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.

Imagine it: Jesus was addressing people who had spent their entire lives with the Old Testament Scriptures. If you would have asked them any question on any theological topic addressed in the Torah, they would not have hesitated to give the right answer, with footnotes. But Christ makes the first indictment that searching,

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knowing, memorizing, teaching, studying and analyzing the Scriptures does not guarantee salvation. No doubt that their skill with the Scriptures was a source of great pride. The humble Christ attacks that pride head-on to say that as well as they may know the Bible, they still can't see that the Word of God is talking about *him!* The very foundation of salvation is prophesied all through the Old Testament Scriptures and they, the learned scholars who led the nation spiritually, couldn't even see it.

The saddest words in this passage may be "yet you refuse to come to me." Why was there unbelief in the hearts of these folks? They simply didn't want him. He served, they wanted to be served. He was submissive to another, they wanted to rule others. He loved, they hated. They chose other things to satisfy their desire for prestige and power. They refused him and were eventually held to account for that.

As important as knowing the Bible is, we can never substitute intellectual assent to God's truth as a means of salvation. Jesus himself is the only way to the Father.

B. SEEKING PERSONAL GLORY, NOT FOR CHRIST

John 5:41-44 - I do not receive glory from people. But I know that you do not have the love of God within you. I have come in my Father's name, and you do not receive me. If another comes in his own name, you will receive him. How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?

It is doubtful that there has been anyone ever born who didn't care about what other people think to some degree. Truth be told, most of us make decisions every day that are based largely on how others will perceive it and how we can look good in their eyes.

Think of the ramifications of this in politics. Rare is the elected official who doesn't take into account pleasing people when they vote on a bill or stand to make an argument on the floor or in committee. In one sense, that's exactly what a politician should do in a representational republic. In another sense however, the way Jesus seems to be speaking here, it can be a disaster.

THESE JEWISH LEADERS WERE OPERATING FROM A DESIRE TO IMPRESS HORIZONTALLY, NOT GIVE GLORY VERTICALLY.

The indictment Jesus makes of his hearers here is that they have the praise of men deeply ingrained into their priority system. Pleasing

people, who are flawed and can have selfish expectations of others, is a motivation that takes one away from wanting to please God. See here that Jesus wasn't guessing about these motivations. He knew what they thought and what moved them to action when he said, "...you do not have the love of God within you." It's reminiscent of the day he said

Matthew 15:7-9 – You hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy of you, when he said: "This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men."

Jesus gave glory to his Father while these Pharisees sought to receive glory from people. This was at the heart of their unbelief. Rhetorically, Jesus asked, "How can you believe if that is your goal?"

C. SUBMITTING TO LAW-KEEPING, NOT TO CHRIST

John 5:45-47 – Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father. There is one who accuses you: Moses, on whom you have set your hope. For if you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words?"

Finally, Christ condemned his hearers' dependence on keeping laws and traditions for their salvation. They had "set their hope" on Moses and the writings in the law. But Jesus again tries to get them to see that that good works will not gain them heaven. Moses' writings pointed to Jesus, the only one who could ever completely fulfill the Law.

CONCLUSION

Remember the main purpose of the gospel of John:

John 20:31 - but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

We have all been given wills to choose our way. Not believing in Jesus is an option. But any other option other than belief in Jesus, the Son of God, will not lead to eternity with God.

1 John 5:12 - Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.