

The controversy in the first half of this chapter results in Jesus further clarifying His relationship to His Father. He refutes His enemies' charge that He is not equal with God the Father. This is the most thorough statement of Jesus' unity with the Father in the Gospels.

In verses 24-30, Jesus spells out the practical implications of His being the Son of God.

What does it mean in verse 24 when it says “Whoever hears my word and believes Him who sent me has eternal life”? Jesus lifts Himself far above the level of any mere man. This is either the babbling of an insane man or the words of God Himself. The message to the Jews is that salvation has nothing to do with your relationship with Abraham. This is all about a different relationship.

Verse 26 Why is Jesus having life in Himself significant? Theologians call this quality of self-existence *aseity* and recognize that God alone possesses it. Jesus and the Father are not the same, but they are equal. This counters both the “Jesus Only” doctrine which confuses the Father and the Son (anciently known as *Sabellianism*, and held today by groups like Oneness Pentecostals). He also counters the “Jesus is not God” doctrine (anciently known as *Arianism*, and held today by groups like the Jehovah's Witnesses).

Verse 27 Why has God given the Son authority to judge? He is the Anointed One whom God has sent, but He is also fully human. Jesus can judge humanity because He belongs to it and understands it.

What are the points Jesus is making in verses 28-30? Jesus makes it very clear that a time is coming when He will raise all the dead from the grave and call them to judgment—not only those who are saved, but those who are not. The righteous will experience the resurrection resulting in eternal life. The unrighteous dead will experience eternal condemnation.

Our Lord knows what His opponents are thinking and so at the outset of His testimony He informs them He knows they will not accept His testimony alone. Why is that? The Old Testament law (Deuteronomy 17:6) required two or three witnesses for a man to be found guilty of an offense. Jesus has much more testimony than this, but it doesn't matter since they won't accept it.

Jesus proceeded to cite four witnesses to His identity. Picture Jesus in a courtroom. He is defending himself rationally and logically.

Four witnesses:

- **Who is the witness in verses 33-35?** John the Baptist. Jesus knew that His critics would not accept the Father's witness to His identity even though Jesus claimed that His words accurately represented the Father's will. He could not prove this claim to their satisfaction. Therefore He cited another human witness who testified about Jesus' identity, namely, John the Baptist. John came into the world to bear witness to the light (John 1:7). Moreover he had borne witness about Jesus to the Jews who had come from Jerusalem to ask who he was (John 1:19-28). Furthermore he had identified Jesus publicly as the Lamb of God (John 1:39-24). John had truly testified that Jesus was the divine Messiah (John 1:40-41).
- **Who is the witness in verse 36?** The witness of the works of Jesus. These works included all of Jesus' activities, including His miracles, His life of perfect obedience, and His work of redemption on the cross. Miracles alone could not prove Jesus' deity since Moses, Elijah, and Elisha had done miracles too.
- **Who is the witness in verses 37-38?** The witness of the Father. **How is the Father a witness?** At Jesus' baptism. Through the Scriptures—including Old Testament prophecies
- **Who is the witness in verse 39?** The witness of the Scriptures. Their failure to recognize Jesus as the prophesied Messiah testified to their lack of understanding the true message of Scripture.

In this teaching Jesus claims that the Old Testament Scriptures are from God and are fulfilled in Him, that the unbelieving Jews have perverted the Old Testament and misunderstood it (just as many do today), and that the Old Testament itself will accuse those who refuse to believe in it.

How does the Lord's tone change in verse 37? The tone of our Lord's “defense” changes, and we see our Lord now taking the offensive, challenging those who oppose Him. Here, He not only admonishes them for not receiving God's witness, He informs them all concerning the real reason they reject Him as the Messiah.

The reasons for their unbelief.

- **Verses 40-41 Reason for unbelief?** Pride!! They refuse to come to Jesus to have life. They think they already have life because they are children of Abraham. Those who seek praise and acceptance from men rather than from God cannot believe in Jesus because they are not willing to come to Him. To be saved, a person must admit that he or she is a sinner, deserving of God's eternal wrath, and unworthy of His favor. To be saved, one must humble himself, and accept God's grace as a gift. The self-righteous find this highly offensive.
- **Verse 42 Reason for unbelief?** They do not have the love of God in their hearts. We see that these reasons essentially have to do with the heart, not with the mind. People often hide behind intellectual excuses or questions, but the bottom line is that they have a *heart* problem with Jesus, not a *head* problem. You can answer all their questions and they still will not believe.
- **Verse 43 Reason for unbelief?** Anytime a person rejects Jesus, it leaves them open to tremendous deception. When someone else comes in his own name, proclaiming himself to be the Messiah, they will accept eagerly him. So it will be in the end times when the anti-Christ comes.

How did they reject the testimony of (the Father) through Moses?

- **If you believed Moses, you would believe Me.** Remember, the Jews took great pride in their attachment to Moses. These religious leaders rejected Jesus because they rejected God's word through Moses. Moses accuses them, because Moses wrote about Jesus and they won't receive the testimony of Moses.
- **For he wrote about Me.** Where did Moses write about Jesus? In many places, but here are a couple:
 - "The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him!" (Deuteronomy 18:15)
 - "Then the Lord said to Moses, 'Make a snake and put it up on a pole; anyone who is bitten can look at it and live.' So Moses made a bronze snake and put it up on a pole. Then when anyone was bitten by a snake and looked at the bronze snake, he lived." (Numbers 21:8-9)

Christ is a "blind spot" for the Jews, and yet He is both the central figure and the key to the Old Testament Scriptures. Because the Jews are blind to Christ, they read the Old Testament as though a veil were over their faces. Only by trusting in Jesus Christ is that veil removed. Then the Scriptures become clear, and the glory of the Lord is revealed, transforming those who believe into His image.

Application: What barriers do you experience—or see those around you experience—that inhibits surrender to God?

MEMORIZE: John 5:39