

Witnesses for the Defense

John 5:30-47

After Jesus healed the paralytic at the pool of Bethesda, the Jewish leaders challenge Jesus (5:1-18). Their persecution of Jesus (5:16) felt like a legal prosecution. In his response to their questions, Jesus claims equality with God and presents his credentials for his authority (5:19-29). The unspoken question of the Jewish leaders was, “Who will give evidence of what you claim about yourself? Who will give evidence of who you are?”

In John 5:30-47, Jesus presents five witnesses to his identity. Since Jesus is God, he can accurately speak of himself. However, he points to five witnesses who can support his statements and persuade others to believe in him. *The testimony of the witnesses points to Jesus being the Messiah.*

If Jesus was the sole witness of his identity, you could dismiss his claims as false. What Jesus said about himself wasn't necessarily untrue or false. It just wasn't sufficient on its own (31). The legal principles of the Old Testament required the presence of two or three witnesses to confirm a matter.

☐ **Jesus introduces five witnesses to his identity**

- **Witness #1: God the Father (32, 37-38)**

God the Father was “another” witness about Jesus.

God the Father bore witness to Jesus through Old Testament prophecies, Jesus' baptism, and the Transfiguration.

- **Witness #2: John the Baptist (33-35)**

The Jewish leaders viewed John the Baptist as an authority and had personally quizzed him (1:19-28).

John the Baptist bore witness about Jesus to the Jews (1:19-28) and identified Jesus as the Lamb of God (1:29-34).

John was a lamp, not the true light.

John's ministry caused a brief excitement about the Messiah. John's witness was true, but had little continuing impact.

- **Witness #3: Jesus' works (36)**

Jesus' works carried more weight than John the Baptist's testimony.

Jesus' works included his miracles, his life of perfect obedience, and his work of redemption on the cross. Everything Jesus did was an extension of the Father's work.

The apostle John included seven miracles or signs in his gospel as evidence of Jesus' identity. He includes three signs in chapters 2-5.

- **Witness #4: The Scriptures (39-44)**

The Old Testament pointed to Jesus—who he was and what he would do.

- **Witness #5: Moses (45-47)**

Moses pointed the Jews to the coming Prophet and urged them to listen to him (Deuteronomy 18:15).

- **Jesus identifies two obstacles to belief**

- **Unwillingness (37-43)**

The Jewish leaders saw all the evidence, but refused to believe.

- **Pride (43-44)**

The Jewish leaders valued the praise of people more than approval from God.

- **Principles to Practice**

- Examine the evidence. Listen to the witnesses.
- Don't allow Bible reading and study to become an end in itself. Believe what it says and live what it teaches.
- Know when to answer questions and when to cut off debate. Sometimes, debate is a sign of rebellion rather than a search for truth.