

## The Testimonies to Jesus

### 1. How can know the truth?

- One of the most common objections people raise about Christianity and in fact all religions is the problem of 'truth'
  - We have all these different religions and philosophies of the world ... each claiming to have the truth about God and life
  - But truth is, so they say, ... "no one really knows"
  - "Each religion is just presenting its own view ... but none of them really knows everything"
  - "They can't know everything > it's too much > too arrogant to claim to know the truth about the big questions in life like > God, life, death, heaven, hell"
- This is especially true of many people's view of Christianity where Jesus says point blank that **he** is "the way, the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father except through me"
- Modern ppl will say
  - "No, no ... you Christians need to be more humble about the truth"
  - "Your view of the world is just one worldview > there are other worldviews that are just as right and acceptable"
  - "Jesus can't be the only way > "Jesus can't claim to have all the truth"
- There is a very famous philosophical illustration people often turn to in this conversation > Blind Men and the Elephant
  - Six blind men > come across an elephant
    - Don't know what it is because they are blind
    - Each begin feeling the elephant to work out what it is
      - Trunk > snake
      - Leg > tree
      - Ear > rug
      - Tusk > spear
      - etc
  - Argument goes that because they can't see the elephant ... they're unable to see the whole picture > they're blind to the truth that is before them
- People will say the same about Christianity and about Jesus
  - You Christians can't claim to know the truth because **no-one** can see the whole truth

- The person telling the story or the person who's using this illustration to make the point against Christianity seems humble by saying we can't know all the truth ...
  - But in reality ... the person is assuming **they** can see the whole elephant > that **they** know the truth > **they're** the only one who isn't blind > everyone else is blind except **them!**
  
- Saying "you can't know everything, you can't know all the truth" > that is a truth claim
  - You can only say that no-one knows all the truth if you claim to know all the truth
  - And so ... the person who objects to Jesus claim to the truth ... is doing the very thing that he is saying that Jesus cannot do ... make a truth claim
  
- Who should we believe when it comes to truth about religion?
  - Buddha?
  - Dali Lama?
  - Muhammad?
  - Ghandi?
  - Confucius?
    - Men who are considered wise
    - Men who made truth claims about God and life
  
- So who should we listen to when it comes to knowing the truth about God and life and death and life after death?
- As we read the gospels we clearly see Jesus saying ... it's me
  - I see the whole elephant > I know all truth because I'm equal with God > I created this world > I'm the one who will judge all humanity and I'm the one who grants eternal life
  
- But what gives us confidence that we should listen to Jesus as opposed to
  - Buddha > Ghandi > Deli Lama > Muhammad or even our own hearts
  
- Well it's the evidence that supports who Jesus is and what he has to say
  - You see Jesus didn't just appear in a vacuum
  - He didn't just appear and make the claims he did without other testimonies / witnesses to support his claims
  - Others who claim to know the truth about God ... have only their testimony to stand on

- They have no other testimony to validate their claims other than their own words
- If we are going to trust the truth claim of someone ... it needs to be validated
- Because establishing the truth of anything requires evidence
  - Something physical or testimony of a witness to validate something
- **Illustration – Hat-trick in Gore**
  - Impossible hat-trick
  - Can call 5-6 guys who could validate that story
- **Illustration – Oscar Pistorius**
- 2013 > killed his girlfriend Reeva Steenkamp in his home
- He said he had mistaken her for an intruder
- With no other testimony to validate his claim ... he is struggling to prove his innocence
- Throughout John's gospel ... we've seen Jesus has make some massive claims as to His own identity
  - Sent by the Father
  - He does the work of the Father, giving life and judging
  - Son of God
  - He's equal with the Father
- But how can he validate these claims? What is there that can give us confidence that what Jesus is saying is true
- Three things
  - Witness of man
  - Work of the Father
  - Word of the Father

## 2. Witness of Man

- One of the testimonies to Jesus came from the man – John the Baptist
- Throughout his ministry JTB
  - Prophesied the coming of Jesus as the Christ
  - Called on the Jews repent and be baptised in preparation for his coming
  - When Jesus did arrive, he pointed people to him

- JTB wasn't just some insignificant guy blogging away from the darkness of his bedroom
  - John the Baptist was recognised as a man of historical importance amongst the first century Jews
  - People came from all over the countryside to hear him speak and to be baptized by him
  - He was someone whom people in the first century listened to
  - Much like how people today listen to Allan Jones or Ray Hadley (JTB had much more credibility than them!)
    - For the Jews regarded him highly, for John was like a light to Israel shining in the darkness and they "*chose for a time to enjoy his light.*"
- John the Baptist pointed to Jesus as a witness > who he was and what he came to do
  - And after JTB had identified Jesus to the disciples he fades into the background and it's the disciples to take up the baton of witnessing / testifying to Jesus
  - That's exactly what John's gospel is > it's John's witness to Jesus' life > testimony to who he is and what he has done
  - He tells us this right at the end of the gospel
    - **John 20:30-31** <sup>30</sup> *Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. <sup>31</sup> But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*
    - **John 21:24** <sup>24</sup> *This is the disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down. We know that his testimony is true.*
- Jesus holds up here the witness of man – those who were there > the eye witnesses who were there
  - We have in the witness of JTB and the four gospels ... multiple witnesses / testimonies to the person and life of Jesus Christ that hold up as historical documents
  - There is no sense whatsoever they are to be understood as myth, fable or fairytale.
  - The men wrote at different times in different places of the Middle East
  - They didn't collude > they certainly had nothing to gain from their witness
- As you read the witness to Jesus' life of these men it is clear they are historically, geographically, politically grounded in the first century

I often find with people who put aside their skepticism and pre-conceptions and take the time to actually read one of the testimonies of Jesus life ... are more often than not struck by the truth of what they are reading

- Lee Strobel > atheist > legal journalist, wife converted > investigated the history of Jesus to disprove Christianity > so convinced by the weight of evidence there was for Jesus ... he became a Christian
  - Col > member of our church last 2 years > self confessed skeptic and doubter for over 50 years of his life
    - Investigated and read the gospels > saw it truth and historicity of Jesus > became a Christian
  - Cathy > grew up in China > Buddhist background > never really considered the claims of Jesus > did CE > read the gospel > now a Christian
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- Our first sphere of evidence to Jesus > The witness of man
  
  - Caution > dismissing eye-witness evidence
  - There is a danger today that we dismiss any evidence that is not scientific
    - Scientific evidence means if you have enough money and facilities you can create all the scientific tests you want and repeat / repeat / repeat the experiment and that's fine
    - While eyewitness evidence is not like that ... it is none-the-less still a valid witness
  - **Illustration - Stu**
    - If I am out clubbing (!) in Kings Cross and witness two blokes get into a fight and I'm called to court as a witness ... my testimony is valid to help the judge make a decision
    - The judge won't say
      - "This evidence isn't scientific enough, therefore we need to go back to Kings Cross and recreate the whole scene in order to reach a verdict"
      - No! The evidence from me as an eye witness is valid
  
  - Similarly, the witness of John the Baptist and the disciples is a valid testimony to Jesus
    - Who he is as the Christ, the Son of God
    - Equal with the Father and the who has all authority to judge and give life to all who believe

### 3. Work of the Father

- In v36 ... Jesus says that JTB testimony about him been surpassed by one even greater
  - That is the testimony of the Father himself
  - Specifically here in v36 it's the work of the Father (v36)
  
- We saw last week Jesus saying in v 19-20 that
  - *"the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. <sup>20</sup> For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does"*
  
- In v36 Jesus says - *"For the very work that the Father has given me to finish, and which I am doing, testifies that the Father has sent me."*
- Work the Father has given Jesus are the miracles he's has been doing
  - pointing people to him as the Christ ... so they will put their trust in him
  
- Throughout John's gospel, John chooses to focus in on just 9 of Jesus miracles
  - Ch 2 > turning water into wine > heals the officials dying son
  - Ch 5 > heals disabled man
  - Ch 6 > feeds 6000 men & walks on water
  - Ch 9 > heals a man born blind
  - Ch 11 > he raises Lazarus from the dead
  - Ch 20 > Jesus rises from the dead
  - Ch 21 > he produces a miraculous catch of fish
  - Of course the greatest work of them all is his death on the cross in our place in order to give us life
  
- Jews had just witnessed this earlier that day when Jesus healed the man who had been disabled for 38 yrs
  
- This is the second sphere of evidence for Jesus > the second witness > the work of the Father
  
- Jesus is claiming he's
  - Son of God who's been sent by the Father
  - All authority to give eternal life and to judge
- And Jesus is giving us the evidence to validate his claims
  - First sphere of evidence > the witness of man
  - Second sphere of evidence > the work of the Father

- **Application**

- A further word of caution for us here
- And that is a caution not to turn a blind eye to this sphere of evidence just because it doesn't fit our understanding of how the world works
  - We might think because dead people don't **normally** rise in this world therefore Jesus cannot raise people from the dead
  - Because H2O doesn't **normally** become Penfold's Grange Hermitage (sadly) ... he can't have turned water into wine
  - Because fish don't **normally** come from nowhere on to the end of your line (I wish they would) .. Jesus cannot have produced a miraculous catch of fish
- There's a danger here that because this evidence does not fit the way I think the world works ... I will discount the evidence before I have conducted investigation
  - That is to reach a conclusion before the evidence is on the table

#### 4. Words of the Father

- First - Witness of man
- Second – Work of the Father
- The third sphere of evidence for the testimonies about Jesus are the words of the Father
- **John 5:37-39** *And the Father who sent me **has himself testified concerning me** ... <sup>39</sup> You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. **These are the Scriptures that testify about me***
- The Father **has** testified > past tense
  - Referring to the words of the Father in the scriptures
  - Scripture = OT
  - The Jews had the scriptures and therefore they had Father's testimony for centuries about Jesus
- Jesus arrival on earth as saviour is not a new thing
  - He was not some flash in the pan revolutionary seeking to upset the establishment
  - He was not some eccentric bloke to took it upon himself to make a name for himself
- For century upon century, page after page after page ... the OT was pointing to, predicting and describing the coming of Jesus

- The OT prophets foretold of Jesus coming whom they described as
  - The Messiah
  - The Suffering Servant
  - The great king who would come from the line of King David
  - Emmanuel = God with us
- And even though the Jews diligently study the scriptures ...
  - The reality is ... for all their knowledge they're missing the one to whom the scriptures are pointing
  - If they'd understood the scriptures they would've understood that Jesus is who he says he is and that what Jesus was saying was true
  - And yet they refuse to go to Jesus as the one who gives life

### Implication

- What Jesus is making clear here is that the scriptures are a valid testimony about him because the Bible is the Word of God
  - It's not just a book **about** God
  - It's a book **from** God
  - Not merely words about God
  - Not just a book written by men > though it is that
- The Bible contains the word of the Father
  - Therefore Jesus knows scriptures are authoritative
  - The Bible is a valid testimony pointing to him

### Application

- This is really relevant to us when it comes to our attitude to the Bible
  - If we think the Bible is just a book **about** God ... then we can treat it as interesting information ... but we don't need to take it seriously if we don't want to
  - If we think the Bible is a book **from** God ... as Jesus says in these verses ... then all of a sudden we need to deal with what it says about Jesus and us and our lives and our eternal future with much more seriousness
- So when you come across things in the Bible that you find difficult, hard to accept ... it means you cannot just dismiss it
  - As soon as we disagree with the Bible and we sideline it or ignore it ... we're immediately saying we know better
  - We're saying **we** are the authority > **we** are above God and he doesn't know what he's talking about ... but we do



- You've made yourself like the person telling the story about the blind men and the elephant ... that you're the one who knows the whole truth
- You've decided
  - "I'm the authority ... not the scripture"
  - "I'm the authority over it ... it's not the authority over me"
- Friends ...
  - either you let your own reason and experience be the authority over the Bible ...
  - Or you let the scriptures be the authority over your own reason and experience
- And before you decide on that ... just think for a moment and consider what gives you the confidence to know that your reason and experience is actually trustworthy?
  - Can you really be that confident that your reason, intelligence, knowledge and experience means you know better?
  - Do you think you can stand at a vantage point that sees more and understands more than the word of Father?
- Jesus had complete confidence in the define origin, power and authority of the scriptures
  - Therefore Christian's don't believe in the infallibility and authority of the scriptures because of sentiment or because of tradition
  - Christians believe it because ... to be a follower of Jesus and reject the truth on which Jesus built his whole life ... is to reject Jesus
- Jesus and the scripture stand together
  - You cannot have one without the other
  - It's impossible for you to follow Jesus and yet reject the very thing on which testified to him and his ministry
- So if the Scriptures are the authoritative Word of the Father ... then not only do we need to search the scriptures to see how they point to Jesus ... but we also need to let the scriptures search us
- In v46-47 Jesus says – *If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me. <sup>47</sup> But since you do not believe what he wrote, how are you going to believe what I say?"*
- You see what Jesus is saying ...
- He's saying ... "You don't believe Moses"
- That would have been ridiculous to the Pharisees > they'd saying ...

- "Are you kidding me?!"
- "We study Moses > we memorize Moses > we know Moses > of course we believe Moses!"
- Jesus is saying "But you don't do what he says"
  
- You may say you believe the Bible
  - but if you don't believe what he says
  - if you don't let the Bible pour over you and argue with you
  - if you don't let the Bible transform your life
  - if you don't do what it says ... you don't really believe it
  
- If you search it ... but you don't let it search you ... you're not allowing the Bible to have authority over life
  - you might say it has authority
  - you may give it lip service ... but you're not actually giving it authority in your life
  
- When you make decisions in life
  - where you live
  - how much money you spend on mortgage / renovations / holidays
  - how you raise your children
  - how you will use time on Sundays
  - what job do you go to
  - what business practices you enter into
  - when you confronted with an ethical dilemma
- Do you let the scriptures have authority over your life?
- Do you let the Bible shape and direct your life?
- If Jesus points to the scriptures as the authoritative word of the Father ... then we need to let it shape and mould our lives
  
- Finally ... what Jesus says here in v46 helps us in the way we read the Bible
- In v46, Jesus says "*If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me.*"
- What we read in the scriptures ... even back in the OT are ultimately pointing to Jesus
- That means ... you haven't understood the scriptures unless they take you to Christ
- You know lots of people read the Bible and think it's all a bunch of rules to be followed and obeyed

- And they find it despairing and legalistic and discouraging
- The points is ... obedience to the Bible is not enough ... you have to come to Jesus Christ because "Moses wrote of me" said Jesus
  - "When Moses wrote about the tabernacle and the Temple and the priesthood the sacrifice ... he was talking about me"
  - "Because I am tabernacle and the Temple and the priest the sacrifice"
- The Jews didn't see that
- So until you read the scriptures that point you to put your trust Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour ... you have not understood or obeyed the scriptures

## 5. Conclusion

- Where are you going to go for truth in this world
  - Go to Jesus
  - And you can go to him with confidence because he's not just making truth claims about himself
  - His testimony is validated by the witness of others
- The witness of man > men who saw, heard and lived with heard Jesus who testify as eye witnesses to him
- Work of the Father > the miraculous signs that pointed to Jesus as the Christ the Son of God
- Word of the Father > the scriptures that are the word of God that foretold of his coming
  
- The evidence is there
  - Will you reject it like the Jews
  - Or will you see the evidence before us that validate the testimony of Jesus
    - The one who is the Christ the Son of God
    - And by believing in him you may have life in his name

## PRAY