

**John 5:30-47**  
**(Isaiah 52:13-53:12; Hebrews 12:1-2)**  
**“Understanding the Scriptures”**

## **Introduction**

Jesus is defending himself against charges of Sabbath-breaking and blasphemy. That may not be significant to us, living as we do in a society that places no particular value on Sabbath-keeping and that has become impervious to blaspheme. But in Jesus' day and in his culture, flagrant law-breaking, and especially blaspheme, were capital offences. As we saw last week, Jesus answered with a display of deep humility and radical obedience. Nevertheless, he intensified his claim to unity with God, claiming both prerogatives and honor that the Bible ascribes to God alone. So we noted that Jesus did not leave us with the alternative of speaking of him merely as a good man and a faithful rabbi. He is either a madman worthy only of our pity, or a conman worthy only of our contempt, or he is everything he claimed to be and therefore worthy of the same worship that is due to God alone.

But that raises two obvious questions: Why should anyone believe his claims? And, why do so many of those who think that they are God's people completely miss the point of his life and ministry, just like these religious leaders who dismissed his claims and were deeply offended at him? It is to these two questions that Jesus now gives answer.

## **Body**

### **1. Why should we believe the testimony of Jesus? Why should we believe that he is worthy of the same worship and obedience as God?**

First, God bears witness to Jesus through the voice of those who point to him – as did John the Baptist – and say, “Look! God's Lamb who takes away sin; God's Son who gives the gift of God's Spirit.” Through this means, some are saved (5:33).

Second, God bears witness to Jesus through the story of Jesus' life and ministry – especially through the signs God did through him to show that Jesus lived and acted in complete and utter dependence upon his heavenly Father (5:36).

Third, God bears witness to Jesus through the Scriptures. Jesus is the fulfillment of the prophecies, the sacrifices, and the promises of the Scriptures that provide the grand narrative that alone explains the meaning human history, as well as of your life and mine (5:39).

**2. In the face of this, why do so many people completely miss the salvation that God offers, even as they busily pursue morality and religion?**

First, they don't understand the purpose of the Bible: that it is all about God rescuing us through his Son Jesus. It is not merely to be believed, studied and taught: that simply fuels religion and morality, which are spiritual dead ends. The big story only saves through the life of Jesus (5:39).

Second, they don't understand the nature of love: that it is all about being rightly related to God, who is the source of love (5:42).

Third, they don't understand the glory for which they were created: that it comes not from human praise and approval, but from God (5:44).

**Conclusion**

Stop studying the Bible for good advice, for a religious system, for laws and morality, for answers to your little questions. If that is all you are seeking, it will kill you, as the apostle Paul observed, "For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life" (2 Corinthians 3:6). If you merely read the Bible for the meta-narrative, the big story of history, it will leave you with no way in, locked out from the good news of God's rescue of humanity. But if you read seeking Jesus, he will find you, and give you all the rest beside, not as an external system of religion, but as living water, love and glory, welling up from the center of your being, flowing out to give life to a thirsty world.

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