

Into Thy Word Ministries Bible Study www.intothyword.org

General Idea: After Jesus healed the lame man during an important Jewish feast, He received the full force of prideful anger and vengeance from the leadership establishment for upsetting the *status quo*. Jesus stated that if He testified to His Divinity on His own behalf, it would not be valid. So, He explained that there was another witness whose testimony was also true because he preached the truth—referring to John the Baptist. Then, He said that the best testimony was not from a mere man, but rather from God the Father Himself. Even though John told them how to be saved (trust in the Lord and wait for the Messiah to come), now the Messiah, Jesus, was in their presence, testifying about the Law and the Prophet's prediction of His coming! Jesus stated His testimony in His teaching and miracles, but the greater witness was the Father Himself. Jesus chastised them for not being true and real. Rather than having God in their hearts, there was only pride and ego, their traditions, and no real belief in God. He said to them: *you think you have eternal life, but all you have is the absence of love and truth. You claim to represent my Father but you won't welcome me; you only have your feeble selves and no real belief. You honor one another but do not honor God; you claim Moses and the Law and Prophets but disrespect their teachings and predictions; you accuse me of error but you are the ones with the great error. You lack hope and since you will not believe, I will be the One to Judge you!*

Contexts and Background:

Jesus is having a debate with the Jewish leadership concerning their traditions, how they viewed the Sabbath, and now, about the fact that the Messiah is here, and that He is both Christ and fully God. Jesus used clever logic and cited their traditions, Scripture, and the need, as well as reference and testimony to this fact. This all started because Jesus dared to heal a man who was in dire distress, a man whom others had passed by for the 38 years he was sick. And, He did this on the Sabbath. This man in need got more than he wanted or needed, yet ironically, was ungrateful and even perhaps betrayed Jesus to save his ego or word. Now the reaction continued. These were the events that led to our Lord's Passion (Lev. 19:18; John 5: 10-12).

Commentary—Word and Phrase Meanings:

- *Testify... testimony/witness.* This was a legal term for both Jews and Romans, here meaning to be an agent with the full authority of the one who sent Him. This is about faithfulness to the One who sends. It also meant one who testifies in a court of law or before an official on behalf of someone else like a lawyer or a diplomat would do today. Isaiah used this term to state how true believers would testify about God to evil nations at the end of days (Isa. 43:10; 44:8; John 1:6-18; 3:22-36; 10:41; 20:21).
- *Valid/ true.* Meaning valid in a court. The law required the testimony of two or more people to convict someone; here Jesus cites the human, the Law and the Prophets, and God Himself. Jesus received the full support and testimony of all of God's revelation and logic. The application for us is that bringing a testimony is essential to knowing, eternalizing, and showing our faith; it is the active demonstration of the Gospel working in us. Christ is the One who gives us grace, forgiveness, and our life, purpose, and salvation; so then, how shall we display it (Deut. 17:6; 19:15)? Our faith is based on historical evidence, logical reasoning, and valid testimonies. Faith is still trusting what we cannot see and believing our God (Rom. 1:16-32; 5:1-11; 10:14-17; Gal. 3:1-4; Eph. 2:8-9; James 2:14-26)!
- *Human testimony.* Referring to John the Baptist whose sole mission was to testify about Jesus so people might believe in Him. He was highly revered by the people—even by some of the officials and leadership there. John was more than a mere prophet, yet, he was a mere man who pointed to the One who came to save us (Matt. 3; John 1:6-8; 8:58; 10:25; Acts 19:3-5).

- *Be saved.* Receiving the gift of eternal life and empowerment for living now. This implies more than just belief; it is a commitment, a confidence, and an identification that leads to trust and obedience (John 3:16-21; 6:37-40; 10:14-18; 17:9)
- *Lamp.* Refers to the small, handheld, clay oil lamp, usually with a wick soaked in olive oil, which was not enough to give light to a large building like a palace. This means being a small reflection. For us, it is also a call to be a living reflection of the Light that Christ gives in Fruit, character, and faith (Gal. 5:21-24).
- *Gave light.* Meaning what is never ending and what is true versus what is not true or what comes against it, such as the darkness of sin. In context, this refers to the true Truth of Christ contrasted to the hypocrisy of those who seek to hide Him with the imitation light of their pride that shines forth with only darkness. This is also the Light of our Lord Jesus Christ, His message of the Gospel, and the true truth that God so loved the world; He came to save those who do not deserve or merit it (Matt. 11:11; John 3:16; 4:24; 6:32; 8:12; 9:5; 10:7-14; 11:25; 14:6; Acts 19:1-3; Rom. 1:19-20; 2:12-16). This is also a call to display the Light that God has given us in both big and small ways (John 1:11-18).
- *Very work.* This refers to the miracles of Jesus that could not be replicated by any human means as a proof for the divinity and claims of Christ (Matt. 7:22-23; 24:24; John 3:2; 10:25, 38; Rev. 13:13).
- *Father.* God's witness should be all that is needed, yet, even the testimony of the God they claimed to know and serve was not enough. If we reject Christ, we also reject God. This is also a contrast to the Exodus where God gave details for every movement and direction the Hebrews were to make for forty years (Matt. 3:17).
- *His form/shape.* A Platonic philosophical term meaning the perfect eternal form that cannot be seen by human means. God cannot be seen because He is omnipresent and omnipotent.
- *His word dwell in you.* Referring to the voice of God that is written down in the pages of Scripture. We have His voice in print but it must also live in our hearts. This is so we will trust and obey His principles. These religious leaders were doing the opposite of this (Psalm 119; 2 Tim. 3:15-16).
- *Study the Scriptures.* Meaning that the Word of God (then the Torah and Writings; now our Bible) contains the prime witness to God and the means by which the Holy Spirit instructs and convicts us. They hold His truth, directions, precepts, and call; they point to God. Thus, if you reject Christ, you reject and disobey the witness of God and His Word (2 Cor. 3:6). They were not doing this, but rather were being wicked, suppressing God's truth. We have no excuse for false teaching or misrepresenting our Lord and Savior or for pride; for God reveals Himself through His creation. The good news for us is that God imputes His righteousness unto us by what Christ has done; He declares us righteous so we will experience life both now and forevermore (Matt. 5:18-21; Rom. 3:21-26; 5:10-19; 10:3).
- *Eternal life.* Meaning our Salvation now and our life in the hereafter as being timeless—available only for the righteous when they die. Here, Jesus offers us eternal life; this also means, in context, that we have hope both now and for tomorrow. Those who receive and trust in Him for salvation have a good life now too. We can have a good and purposeful life now even though our real life, for which we were made, is still to come in eternity. We possess His gift now and forevermore so we have fellowship with God both here and now and also forever. As Christians, we experience a glimpse of this from worship that glorifies God because we love Him back and trust Him for our lives now. This resonates into eternity; our love for each other, God and us, is eternal (Psalm 90:2; John 1:7; 3:16-21; 6:47; 10:28; 17:3; Rom. 8:1; Col. 1:13).
- *Have life.* Christianly is not just a future bliss; it is purpose, meaning, and life for the here and now too! This also refers to God's purpose and love and the contrast to sin and worldliness (that is darkness); it is the classic good versus evil, where the Good God and His metaphor of Light will win out.

- *Praise.* A chief aspect of being a follower of Christ is to be grateful for what He gives; this is a prime expression of worship.
- *Love of God.* God first loved us; how do we then respond? We are called to respond by loving God. Faith is based on knowledge given by God. Faith is not just simple trust, nor is it just feelings or fad; faith is not blind trust either, because we know the One who is leading (1John 4:19)!
- *Hearts.* Our motivation is to understand who Christ is and to put our faith in Him. This is also about the tangible reality of a loving and caring God. Your faith can progress deeper and deeper as more of Christ is revealed to you. Jesus has the power of life; He also has the power to save and the power to empower us to live out our lives with faith now (John 20:31).
- *Accept him.* In ancient times, when one rejected the agent or messenger, he rejected the authority of the one who sent the message, whether it was a king or, in this case, God Himself.
- *Accuse.* The charges they brought against Jesus were the charges they actually abused and brought upon themselves. The witnesses who testify to Jesus will convict and judge those who condescend and refuse His gift of grace. Jesus is the Savior, but He is also the Judge. There is no escape from God, His Love, or His judgment. Not even death can keep Jesus' voice and will from coming about (Deut. 18:15; Luke 24:27, 44-46; Acts 3:18; 17:2; 18:28; 26:22-23; 28:23; Rev. 20:22-15).
- *Moses.* He represents the quintessential Law and the Prophets, and the Old Testament that is now fulfilled through the grace of Christ. This is a contrast of the covenants God has had with humanity. His testimony is considered absolute, as He was God's prime agent and intercessor to the Jews and gave testimony about Jesus and thus now condemnation to those who reject Him (Gen. 49:10; Ex. 12:21; Lev. 16:5; Num. 24:17; Deut. 18:15; Luke 24:25-27, 44).
- *Hopes are set.* Meaning who and what do you trust and serve? These leaders trusted in themselves and their traditions, relying on pretentious pride and self-seeking praise to one's self. Thus, they could not accept Truth, or the One God sent, or to really worship and praise God which can't be done by a prideful heart. This also means to convert to Christ who is the new living Hope, inheritance, security, and Lord God. Thus, the question implied is, *what are we doing with it now?* Our new life must produce results (Deut. 6:4-9; 11:17-20; Jer. 1:11-12; Micah 1:10-15; Matt. 23; John 1:12-13; 19:11-13; Rom. 9:7-8; 2 Cor. 5:17-20; 2 Cor. 5:17; 2 Tim. 3:14-17; Titus 3:5; James 1:17-18; 3:15-17).
- *Believe.* This refers to our salvation and we do not earn it by any means or merit; we only receive it by our faith. Also, this is a warning not to resist God's love and offer of salvation and grace. The stubborn will and rebellion of a person is his/her own worst enemy; unbelief is the only basis for judgment and condemnation. Thus, we as Christians must live by faith as this is the smart thing to do (John 1:18-32; 1 Cor. 1:22-30).

Devotional Thoughts and Applications:

Righteousness cannot be achieved by any human effort; we can do nothing outside of Christ. God's will is in complete control; we must remove whatever is blocking us to realize this. Pleasure, and those choices that are deliberately contrary to His character, will leave us "smack dab" in front of an impenetrable barrier. Receive His grace and sanctification for your life (Duet. 33:27; Rom 7:7-25; Rev. 1:17).

Righteous determination requires persistence in order to overcome barriers that hold us back—those that can be overcome by more effort, right thinking, clear goals, and help from others. Obstacles that are wrong, misplaced, or laden with sin are the ones we are to hurdle first. We are to honor the obstacles and timing that God gives, and not rush through with matters for which we are neither called nor ready. Our study of His Word, our prayer life, and listening to good, godly advice will be our keys to unlocking the right doors and making sure we do not open the wrong ones. Our determination needs to be

governed by righteous desire, commitment, and dedication to God's principles. You are on the right track when it is your desire to smash the sin and idols in your life. If you have the desire to transform laziness or wrong direction into ways you can improve with good, biblical, quality goals, you are on the right track. If you are driven by pride or just the motivation to excel at all costs, it is a good bet you are on the wrong track and not in this Godly Character of determination—just into yourself.

The Essential Inductive Questions (for more Inductive questions see Inductive Bible Study):

1. What does this passage say?
2. What does this passage mean?
3. What is God telling me?
4. How am I encouraged and strengthened?
5. Is there sin in my life for which confession and repentance is needed?
6. How can I be changed, so I can learn and grow?
7. What is in the way of these precepts affecting me? What is in the way of my listening to God?
8. How does this apply to me? What will I do about it?
9. What can I model and teach?
10. What does God want me to share with someone?

Additional Questions:

1. Have you ever been the recipient of anger or vengeance from someone or a group for standing up for the truth? How do you feel when someone upsets the *status quo*?
2. Have you ever experienced a glimpse of God in worship? What does it mean to you to have a life that glorifies Christ with a love for and trust in Him?
3. Why would the Holy God incarnate have a debate with the Jewish leadership concerning traditions?
4. Jesus offers you eternal life. So, how has he offered you a hope for both now and for tomorrow? How can His empowerment help you have a good, purposeful life now too?
5. Why is it important that Jesus did not testify to His Divinity alone? What are we doing now with living Hope, inheritance, and security in our Lord God?
6. Why did Jesus chastise these religious leaders? Would He do this today with our leaders?
7. How would you answer the question *how can one be saved*? How does trusting in the Lord play a part? How do pride, ego, and traditions get in the way?
8. How do you feel about our faith being based on historical evidence, logical reasoning, and valid testimonies? How does this help you trust and believe our God who is not seen?
9. If Jesus were to ask you, *where is your heart set*, what would be your truthful response? What would your answer say about you and where you are headed? What do you need to do?
10. How have you brought a testimony to someone? How can having a testimony help you with knowing, eternalizing, and showing your faith? What can you do better to have an active demonstration of the Gospel working in you?
11. What do you think would happen today if Jesus were in people's very presence testifying about Himself and how to be saved? How would most people respond?
12. What happens when there is an absence of love and truth in your home or church? What needs to be done to prevent this?