

Moses Wrote About Me

HN/SS 17/10/04 am

Reading: Luke 24, John 5:31-47

Study: John 5:39-47

Psalms: 67,71:1 -5, 71:14-17, 71:22-24

We come to the third and final section of this discourse in which Jesus is defending himself against the accusation of breaking the Sabbath law and of making himself equal with God. Jesus witnessed of himself that he was sent by the Father and does everything together with the Father, and that he gives life and exercises judgment by authority of the Father. He then listed four other witnesses that supported his claim to deity, to being the Son of God. There was John the Baptist, there were the works that he did, and there was the Father himself.

Today we will firstly examine his final witness, that of Scripture itself. And then we will see how Jesus confronted his accusers, men who knew the Scriptures and venerated Moses. He confronted them with the truth, the truth that this same Moses in fact accused them, for they failed to see that the very Scriptures they studied spoke about Christ.

Witness of Scripture

We touched on the witness of Scripture last time for it is in the Scriptures that the witness of the Father is found. These Jews were men who knew the Scriptures – they knew them inside out. They prided themselves in such learning. The Jewish leaders came to Jesus quoting Scripture. ‘This is what Moses wrote’ they would say. It is sobering to remember that the devil did much the same thing. He quoted Scripture to tempt Jesus.

You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life. The word *search* may be read as imperative or as indicative – in Greek, both forms are the same. The context points to taking this as the indicative. Jesus is not exhorting them to read the Bible for they are doing that, and they think that they have eternal life in these Scriptures. Of course, he is not criticizing them for reading the Scriptures as such, but he is pointing out that *these are they which testify of me*. Diligent study is of no benefit if they do not understand this truth.

Consider the apostle Paul. He was one of these Pharisees before he was converted. He was most learned in the Scriptures and was zealous for the law. He thought that in doing these things he would get eternal life – the reward of his ‘works of the law’. But one day Jesus appeared to him and his whole understanding of the Scriptures changed. He now saw that all that was written pointed to Jesus as the Messiah, to Jesus as the Son of God, to Jesus as the Saviour of the world.

The life which he sought, eternal life, was not gained by trying to obey the law. A rich young ruler came to Jesus (Luke 18). What did he ask? *Good teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?* After pointing out that only God is good – saying in effect that he was God – Jesus said to him *You know the commandments* and quoted a number of them. The young man was so happy as he proudly claimed *all these I have kept since my youth!* Almost there but not quite! Jesus demanded one more thing – come follow me. Leave all and come follow me.

But you are not willing to come to me that you may have life. How tragic. These men were looking for eternal life just like the young ruler. They were even searching the Scriptures, they were in the right place. But their heart was not right before God. They were not willing to come to Jesus and believe in him. Until they did so, they would go on searching and searching in the very word of God itself but would remain in darkness.

How many today in the same position as these Jews? Whole groups of 'Christians' who are going through the motions, performing the rituals, even reading the Bible at times, but they do know Jesus Christ as their personal saviour and Lord. Come, come unto me says Jesus and you will have life, you will find rest for your soul.

Honour of men

Two or three witnesses were required to establish the truth according to the law. Jesus put forward witnesses – four witnesses- that supported his claim to being the unique Son of God. But there was one witness he did not have. He did not have the witness of these religious leaders.

Jesus had entered the world of men. He had entered the world where men seek the praise and honour of other men. These Jews had their place in society. They were religious leaders. They said what the Scriptures said or did not say, they said what was and was not acceptable in terms of worship. They were the ones who would determine whether or not this man was the Messiah. Their council, the Sanhedrin, would decide these matters.

But like any council of men, it was a place of political posturing, of seeking praise and influence while at the same time being politically correct. Pride and arrogance was only surpassed by their ignorance of the truth taught in the Scriptures.

See how they derided their own officers for suggesting that *no man spoke like this man Jesus (7:46)*. Have *any of the rulers or the Pharisees believed in him?* They were like sheep. The gate was open. All they had to do was enter; all they had to do was believe. But no, they stayed with the group. They feared men more than they feared God. They loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.

Have people changed? Is not the Lord still looking for men and women who will follow him no matter what the cost? The cost of losing friends may be great. Pride is a powerful passion. Remember Jesus was standing against the religious authorities of the day. But He said *I do not receive honour from men*. 'So long as there is anything that man secretly loves more than God there will be no true faith' (Ryle).

And again, when Nicodemus dared to suggest that they listen to Jesus they snapped at him also. *Are you from Galilee? Search and look for no prophet has arisen out of Galilee (7:52)*. Religious pride can be so tragic. These men knew it all. There was no point in listening to what he said, no point in examining his witnesses for they had determined what the Scriptures said. As we noted last time, there is no man so dangerous as the blind man who thinks he sees.

Jesus did not need the witness or the approval of these religious leaders. Hence, they saw him as a threat to their religious establishment. These were not men who had the love of God in their

hearts. Their desires and concerns were the same as other worldly men – to accept and give praise to one another.

We probably do not appreciate as we should the great pressure that was upon a man like Martin Luther to conform to the religious establishment. The Reformation was born out of a personal stand for the truth. Here was a man who feared God more than man. Here was a man who passed up the glories of the visible church in order to seek *the honour that comes from the only God*.

But by the same token, we must not be those who hold blindly to the teaching of Luther or any other man. Sometimes it seems that men lose sight of the whole point of the Reformation – a stand for the truth of Scripture, not the teaching and traditions of men.

Accused by Moses

These Jews accused Jesus of breaking the Sabbath and also of blasphemy by making himself equal with God. Jesus witnessed to them himself of his divine Sonship and also brought other witness before them. As he concludes his defence, he actually turns the tables on his accusers leaving them with no leg to stand on. He says that *Moses in whom you trust*, Moses whom they claimed as their great authority, this same *Moses wrote about me*.

All through his ministry, the Jews came to Jesus saying ‘now Moses commanded this, or Moses said that’ (8:5, Matthew 19:7, 22:24). They thought Jesus was undermining the law of Moses. They kept reminding him of what Moses said – as if he did not know! Moses wrote about the law. He was the lawgiver – right? Yes indeed he did. But is that all?

Many Christians are as blind as these Jews were, as to what Moses actually wrote about. *He wrote about me* said Jesus. But law is law and gospel is gospel they say. There are two dispensations. Jesus said *Moses wrote about me*. Yes – the Pentateuch, including the law, is about Jesus. God did not send Jesus into this world as an afterthought because the law failed.

See what else the resurrected Jesus said in Luke 24:27 *And beginning with Moses...things concerning himself*. And in 24:44f *things must be fulfilled that were written in the law of Moses...concerning me*. History, prophecy, and typology – it is all there in the Old Testament pointing to Jesus.

If we read Moses or the Prophets failing to understand that they speak of Christ and are fulfilled in Christ, then like these Jews we will be accused by Moses himself for our ignorance and arrogance. Such attitudes robbed these Jews of the will to come to Jesus. What do you will in your heart?

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