

Sunday Sermon 06/04

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For those of you who have just stepped onto our campus, today is one of those wonderful reminders that number 1, we're not in charge; and number 2, a lot of what we think we need, we find out we don't need at all. And how good it is to be reminded on days such as today that when you boil it all down, the only thing we really need is the Lord himself. So this morning as we prepare, this service you actually have the opportunity to read your Bible because we can see our Bibles, but as we prepare to be challenged, let us pray that our focus will remain solely upon him.

Lord, as we come to this time of being challenged, as we come to this time of being hopefully convicted by your word, thank you, O God, thank you that you messed up our schedule today. Thank you that you showed us very vividly that no matter how we plan, no matter what we do, that you ultimately are in charge and you have a plan that is bigger and greater than we could ever imagine. So God, I just pray today that whatever our preconceived ideas, no matter what our thoughts were that we would yield to you and you alone today. God, thank you that no matter what has or does happen around us, that you never change. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

This morning I do want to encourage you to open your Bibles to the Gospel of John 5, and as you can see, things are going to be a tad bit different this morning because before you is a multitude, in fact, one of my favorite words, a plethora of Scriptures that I'm going to allude to or reference and there are some of you who are note takers, if you're a note taker this morning, your pen or pencil is going to be smoking in about 10 or 15 minutes. There are others of you who you want to be able to physically see with your eyes either in your Bible or on your phone with a Bible app, you want to be able to see the Scriptures that are referenced. Today there is going to be so much that we turn to, allude to or reference, I wanted you to have the whole package in advance.

So before you is all the Scripture that we're going to be looking at today but we're going to begin in John 5 and in John 5, we're going to address a question that if we were to be honest with ourselves today, I would be willing to say the overwhelming majority, if not every single one of us, has asked this question at some point in life. Have you ever asked the question: how do we know that we're right? I mean, when you look at all the faith systems and all the world religions and what everybody says, how do we know that Jesus is really the answer? How do we know that Christianity is really the truth? Maybe you

haven't stood or stayed up late at night pondering that question but maybe somebody has posted that question to you. How do we know that Jesus is the answer? How do we know that Christianity is true?

So today from John 5, we're going to look at the foundation or the foundations of our faith to address that question where we can know conclusively that Jesus Christ is who he claimed to be and always will be who he says that he is. Now in John 5, we have an audience of skeptics. We have an audience of individuals who are skeptical of who Jesus is. They are frustrated with him. They're upset with him because he had the audacity to claim that he was God in flesh. He had the audacity to say that he was equal with the Father. And Jesus has testified of himself, but beginning in verse 31 of John 5, as we'll see in just a moment, Jesus is going to draw the proverbial line in the sand. He's going to raise the stakes and say, "Well, if you're not willing to listen to my testimony, how about these individuals?" Beginning in verse 31 of John 5 says,

31 If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true. 32 There is another that bears witness of me; and I know that the witness which he witnesses of me is true. 33 You sent unto John, and he bare witness unto the truth. 34 But I receive not testimony from man: but these things I say, that you might be saved. 35 He was a burning and a shining light: and you were willing for a season to rejoice in his light. 36 But I have greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father has given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father has sent me. 37 And the Father himself, which has sent me, has borne witness of me. You have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape. 38 And you have not his word abiding in you: for whom he has sent, him you believe not. 39 Search the scriptures; for in them you think you have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. 40 And you will not come to me, that you might have life. 41 I receive not honour from men. 42 But I know you, that you have not the love of God in you. 43 I am come in my Father's name, and you receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him you will receive. 44 How can you believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that comes from God only? 45 Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuses you, even Moses, in whom you trust. 46 For had you believed Moses, you would have believed me: for he wrote of me. 47 But if you believe not his writings, how shall you believe my words?

Now in this discourse, in this verbiage that Jesus is sharing with us, he is addressing the question of skepticism. He is addressing the question of those who question or doubt and he does so by sharing with us the testimony of four entities in addition to himself, and he's building a foundation that has its roots in a past standard.

I want you to look at verse 18. Verse 18 of John 5, these skeptics, these doubters, are so upset with Jesus they want to take his life. They are so upset with him. Notice what it says: they sought to kill him. Here's the problem: they claimed to be adherents to the

word of God, they claimed to not only know and to believe but have memorized what we know as the Torah, the first five books of the Bible, and their own standard would not allow them the satisfaction that they desired.

In the book of Numbers 35, now I know that most of you here today do your daily quiet time in the book of Numbers so I know you're familiar with it. But in Numbers 35:30, there is a passage of Scripture that says this: the Israelites who have come out of Egypt, the Israelites who have wandered in the wilderness, the Israelites who are about to go into the Promised Land, when God is giving them the instruction manual for life, he says, "Do not accuse somebody having only one witness, and surely do not put anybody to death if you only have one witness." Now do you see the quandary these guys are in? They want to kill Jesus, they want to eliminate Jesus, the only problem is, as we read in verse 31, the only witness they have is his own testimony.

In Deuteronomy 17, right before they go into the Promised Land, verse 6, a very famous verse that you know of but you might not have known where it was located, it says that in the mouth of two or three witnesses is where you may accuse somebody and have them put to death. You remember the story, literally the night before Jesus' crucifixion in a trial that was held illegally by every means imaginable, they spent hours trying to get just two people to come together who could come up with the same lie that might somehow incriminate Jesus. Why? Because the same men who put Jesus on trial are the same men who are surrounding him in John 5 and they claim to be adherents to the law so they must live by the law, and what does their law state? That you cannot accuse somebody, you cannot condemn somebody unless you have two or three witnesses.

And by the time you get to verse 31, there is only one witness but I love what Jesus did because I don't if it's just my competitive nature or my competitive spirit, Jesus basically doubles down on the skeptics. He says, "You require two or three, how about I give you five? I will double what you require. I've given you one, how about I give you four more? John the Baptist, his own works, the testimony of the Father, and the Scriptures themselves." These individuals who questioned the truth and the validity of who he was, Jesus says, "I'll give you twice as much as you even claim to require."

Today as we deal with how do we know that Jesus is real, how do we know that Jesus is the truth, today is one of those days where he's going to lay a foundation – listen – twice as much as even the "law" would require. Which brings us to the present situation. Jesus is in the midst of this congregation and he shares a testimony. Now, he begins with John the Baptist. Now this is important because in Malachi 4, this is the last chapter of your Bible, this is 400 years prior to the silence. Now for those of you that don't know, there are 400 years of silence between Malachi 4 and Matthew 1, so the last thing that the Lord gives the Jewish people is Malachi 4. Three individuals are mentioned in that chapter: the coming Messiah, Moses and Elijah.

Now I think it's interesting that when you get to the Mount of Transfiguration when Jesus is transfigured before them, you have Jesus, Moses and Elijah. I think it's even more fascinating that when you get to Revelation 11, in those end days we find Moses and

Elijah once again. But in Malachi 4:5, it says before the coming of the Messiah, Elijah must come. Now here's why that's important: not only is it a prophetic word, not only is it the last chapter of the Old Testament but these individuals who were skeptical, these men who doubted who Jesus really was, every year when they gathered at Passover, every year when they as a family sat down and remembered deliverance from Egypt and the promise of a future, they always sat an empty chair for Elijah. They knew this prophecy as well as any other one in Scripture. Here's what's interesting: in Matthew 11 from the mouth of Jesus himself, if you have a Red Letter Bible, this is in red letters. Jesus made this statement, "If you will receive me, this," speaking of John the Baptist, "is Elijah." Jesus threw down the proverbial line in the sand and he said, "Hey, if you receive me, he is the fulfillment of this prophecy."

Why is that important? Because the same John the Baptist who these same men would not fight or argue with or refuse, on the banks of the Jordan River there in John 1 said, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." This man who looked like and acted like and spoke exactly as Malachi 4 said he would, declared that Jesus is the Messiah.

But then Jesus ramps it up a little bit. He said, "If you won't listen to me and if you won't listen to John the Baptist, look at my works." Now, this is interesting to me because what Jesus is saying is, "Why don't you put who I am to the test of your own Scripture, to the test of prophecy, and to the testimony of time." Revelation 19:10, it says that the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy and what that communicates to you and I is this: if you want to know that Jesus is the real deal, look to the prophecies about who the Messiah would be and see how his life lines up against them.

Now there are many skeptics and there are many doubters who claim that Jesus was a self-fulfilled prophet. In other words, what he did is he looked at the Old Testament Scriptures, he looked at what the Old Testament said and he ordered his life so as to be a "false fulfillment" thereof. Here's the problem and I want to put yourself in these same shoes. Of the 48 prophecies that are spoken of, the life, the death, and the resurrection of Jesus, there are some of which there is no way possible he could have had anything to do with fulfilling them.

Let me give you an example. Please, if you're able to, raise your hand this morning as an affirmation if you decided what town you were born in. Raise your hand. Nobody does, yet the Bible said he would be born in Bethlehem and he was.

How many of you with the showing of your hands at age 2 got to decide to tell your family where you were going to live? None of us are able to raise our hand because we know those are things that are outside of our control. And yet here you have an individual saying, "I am the fulfillment of all of these and more."

In John 17, we find ourselves the night before the crucifixion. Jesus is in the garden of Gethsemane. You probably know the story well, that after they left what we call the Last Supper, they go to the garden of Gethsemane, which by the way means a squeezing out or

a pressing, and Peter and James and John go into that inner garden with Jesus and he commands them and says, "Please pray for me." He says, "The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak." You know the story that three times Jesus goes to pray and the disciples, the apostles, they slept. And yet it was there in John 17 that Jesus would make this statement in his prayer to the Father. Verse 4, he said, "I have finished the works of which you gave me to do." So the night before his crucifixion, the night before they would pierce his hands and his feet and put a crown of thorns on his head, he said, "Okay, Father, I've done everything that was asked of me."

Here's where I find intrigue: if you were to look at the prophecies of Jesus, at the prophecies of the Messiah, of those 48 specific prophecies, only 40 of them had been fulfilled when he made that statement. You say, "Well, how could Jesus say, 'I've done all you asked me to do,' when there was still 8 left?" Because just like his birth and going to Egypt at age 2, when they nail him to a cross, you don't have the ability to make somebody gamble over your clothes. When they nail you to a cross, you cannot control what people say and/or do, and the last interesting prophecy that is fulfilled is found in Psalm 69:21 where it said that the Messiah would be thirsty. You remember of the seven statements that Jesus made on the cross, one of those, the shortest of the statements, he says, "I thirst." And so what we see is Jesus saying, "Hey, if you're not going to listen to me and if you're not going to listen to John the Baptist, at least look at your own Scriptures and what they say about the coming Messiah and put my life against the test."

Now at this point, Jesus has technically fulfilled all that the law requires, 2 or 3 witnesses. He could have stopped. He could have ceased. He could have said, "Hey, guys, take that. Deal with it." But he doesn't. This is what I love about Jesus, he ramps it up. He says, "If you won't listen to that, how about the Father? How about the Lord himself?" You know, in Matthew 3 we have the baptism of Jesus. We have that time where Jesus comes to the River Jordan and John the Baptist is there and he's baptizing folks and Jesus comes down and he says, "Hey, I'm here to be baptized." John the Baptist says, "Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa. I'm the one that needs to be baptized by you, not you of me." And Jesus says – listen to this – "Suffer the Scriptures to be fulfilled." When Jesus comes out of the water, there is a voice from heaven that says, "This is my Son whom I am well-pleased." The physical audible voice of God.

Why is this critical to the story? Because these individuals who are skeptical of Jesus either were present or knew somebody that would have been there because every time John the Baptist baptized anybody, the skeptics of him were there present. So here the audible voice of the Lord speaks and says, "This is my Son."

Now I want you to think about at this point what these individuals, what our world today has to reject to reject Jesus. You have to reject his own testimony. You have to reject what John the Baptist said. You have to reject the fulfillment of prophecies. And you have to reject the audible voice of God himself.

But finally Jesus says, "Okay, maybe you weren't there to hear the voice of the Father. Maybe you never witnessed John the Baptist technically baptize myself or somebody

else. Maybe you're not familiar with the prophecies. Fine. Search the Scriptures." Do you realize that Jesus is opening the proverbial can of worms right now? He's saying, "I encourage you, go in and start digging and see what you find." Well, if you were to go on that journey, if you were to begin to search the Scriptures and decide how do we know if Jesus is really the Messiah the world is looking for, you can start in Genesis 3. I mean, we're in the same chapter where humanity fell. We're in the same chapter where we decided that we were smarter than God. We rebelled against God, we thought we knew better, we fell into sin, and in verse 15 of Genesis 3, the Lord speaks a pronouncement of judgment to the serpent. Here's what he says, "The seed of the woman will one day crush your head." It's a statement that the Messiah is going to come and he's going to alleviate, he's going to solve, he's going to address humanity's sin problem. So when Jesus says, "Search the Scriptures," he's saying, "You can go all the way back to the garden of Eden. You can go all the way back to that first rebellion of humanity and you will find me spoken of."

Genesis 3:15 we call the first Gospel. For those of you that like to play Scrabble, oftentimes we call it the protoevangelium. That'll get you some points when you play that game. But nonetheless, Jesus spoke of it but what may be even more critical than that is found in Deuteronomy 18. Notice what Jesus does in John 5, he not only addresses the Scriptures but he invokes a specific name. He said, "Moses spoke of me." Now, in your Old Testament, there are probably three characters that rise above all others: you've got Abraham, Moses and David, but what makes Moses so unique is he is the one that delivered the Israelites out of bondage. He is the one that brought down the Ten Commandments. Moses is the one whom the Lord used to give the very Scriptures that these guys claim to abide their entire life by. So when Jesus says, "Search the Scriptures," he ramps it up again and says, "And even look to the testimony of Moses." In Deuteronomy 18, inspired by the Lord himself, Moses the prophet makes this statement, he says that the coming Messiah will be after himself. In other words, look to Moses and you're going to see what the Messiah is going to look like. The Messiah's mannerisms and behaviors will mimic that of Moses.

Now think about that with me for just a moment: what was Moses' first "plague" that the Lord brought upon the Egyptians? There was pristine clean water that was turned into blood and Jesus' first miracle was pristine clear water that was turned into wine. And I know you're thinking, "But wine is not blood," but, yes, the Bible says that wine is – listen – the blood of the grape. And what Jesus is saying to all of those who are skeptical and all those that are critical, he is communicating very clearly, he said, "If you're not going to trust what I say and you're not going to trust what John the Baptist says and you're not going to trust what the prophecies say and you're not going to trust the audible voice of God, at least realize that my first miracle is an exact replication of what Moses said the Messiah would do." Do you realize that when we question our faith, do you realize when others question the validity of Christianity, we have what we might call a sure foundation. It's beyond just one or two witnesses, Jesus says, "I'll give you twice as much as you need."

Now there is this past standard, there is the present situation, and here's where it gets interesting. There is what I want to call today a future scenario. I want us to go a little bit beyond John 5. What are the ramifications, what is the impact in our lives if we understand what Jesus is communicating today?

Well, the first verse we need to look at and I'm going to turn there today, is Psalm 118:22, right in the middle of your Bible. In Psalm 118, we have a passage of Scripture where the Messiah, whom we know as Jesus, is described in a very unique fashion. Now, verse 22 of Psalm 118, speaking of the Messiah, says, "The stone which the builders refused is become the headstone or the capstone of the corner." Now, in your Bibles some of them may say that this Messiah is the cornerstone, others read he is the capstone of the corner. Now, I'm not an engineer and I'm not an architect but allow me for a brief moment to kind of peel away the layers of this theological onion. When Jesus is called the cornerstone, that means that he is the foundational piece of the foundation for the building that is going to be built. Now, a cornerstone, that which is placed on the edge, is not only a mark of stability and security, but I think we all would agree there is a sharpness to the edge thereof. That's important in just a moment. However, some of your Bibles read that he is the capstone of the corner. Now, what that means is when you're building a building, you always have to have a cornerstone, you always have to have that key foundational structure, however, there is one physical structure that has as its cornerstone a capstone and that would be a structure that in our vernacular would look very similar to a pyramid. You say, "Well, why is that important?" Because as a pure cornerstone, you would have had a sharp edge, as the capstone of a pyramid type structure, you would not just have a sharp edge, but you would have a very sharp point.

Some of you are saying, "Why is that critical to the future?" I want you to turn in your Bibles to the book of Daniel. Now the book of Daniel, particularly chapter 2, is one of the most incredibly historical relevant passages in all of your Bible. Let me share with you what's happening in Daniel 2 and we're going to wrap all this up this morning. In Daniel 2, a man by the name of Nebuchadnezzar has had a dream. Now Nebuchadnezzar was the ruler of Babylon. He was the man who was personally responsible for going into Jerusalem, taking the Jewish people captive, and taking them all the way to Babylon. He was a narcissist, he was a megalomaniac, I mean, this guy thought more of himself than anybody you could ever imagine. And he has a dream and in this dream he is terrified. He is bothered and so he calls all the soothsayers, he calls all the Chaldeans, he calls all the people who claim to know something about anything like this and he says, "Okay, guys, I need you to help me out. I've had a dream that is disturbing, I've had a dream that's keeping me up at night, I need the interpretation." Well, these young men come to him and say, "Oh, Nebuchadnezzar, we'd love to help you out, here's the only problem: how can we interpret a dream unless you tell us what the dream is?" To which he says, "If you can't tell me what I dream, then you must have been lying to me all the while. Tell me what I dreamed." To which they said, "There is no man on earth that can do that, 'only the gods can do this.'" Do you know what Nebuchadnezzar says? He says, "Okay, off with all your heads. All of them." He said, "You've been lying to me. You've been taking advantage of me. You've been taking my money for all these years. I want rid of you."

So the command is sent forth to kill all these guys of which Daniel is considered one of them. Daniel raises his hand and he says, "Whoa, whoa, guys, hold on, hold on. I'll tell you what, give me one night, give me one night and I'm going to have my friends pray for me and I'm going to seek the Lord and I'm going to give an answer to Nebuchadnezzar. Don't kill anybody yet." So they stave off the execution for one night. The Lord communicates to Daniel. He shows up the next day to Nebuchadnezzar and he says, "Okay, O King, I've got your answer. You had a dream and this is the dream. You had a vision of a statue of an image. The head was made of gold. The arms and the shoulders were made of silver. The torso was made of brass. The legs were made of iron and the feet were made of a mix between iron and clay. This is the dream that you had." He says, "Oh, you're absolutely right! That was my dream. Now what does it mean?" He says, "You, O Nebuchadnezzar, you are the head. You are that single solitary focus of gold and of power and of authority, but there's coming a day where your reign will cease and another will come." We know them historically as the Medes and the Persians, two branches that ruled the world, though yet not as strong as Nebuchadnezzar so lesser in value as the image portrays. The Medes and the Persians would give way to the Grecian or the Greek Empire, one known as Alexander the Great, a torso or a core of strength and valor. But then they would give way to what we know as the Roman Empire, two legs of strength and speed and pillars of leadership.

Do you realize that in that dream and in that vision and in that interpretation thousands of years of human history are laid out for each and every one of us today? We look back at how the world has been governed and how the world has been determined. Yes, the Babylonians ruled. Then the Medes and the Persians. Then the Greeks. Then the Romans. But since that time, hardly a moment or a time where we could conclusively say there has been a unified, singular, world dominating power and yet he tells the king there is a day coming that even after the fall of what you and I know as Rome, there is a federation of ten that will gather. That's why your book of Revelation is so important, it talks about this in the future, that they will have the strength of that Roman Empire but they will have the fragility of humanity and clay.

Now, the reason I went through all of that trouble is to get you to Daniel 2:45. I want you to see what the Bible says about Jesus as the capstone or Jesus as the cornerstone. In verse 45 of Daniel 2, it says, "Forasmuch as you saw that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, that it broke in pieces, the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver and the gold; the great God has made know to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure." Let me tell you what Daniel 2:45 is saying: that there is coming a day where not just the Babylonians or the Medes and the Persians, the Greeks, the Romans, but there is coming a day where all of human history, there is coming a day where all of human endeavors are going to be taken down in a single act and according to chapter 2, verse 45, it is a stone that is cut without hands that lands on this image and destroys it all. Who did Psalm 118 just say this was? Jesus.

So Jesus stands before his critics and he says, "Guys, your law determines that there be two or three witnesses, I'm going to give you twice as much as you need." And guess what? They still refused to believe. And today, how many people with all the testimony

of Scripture, with all the testimony of history, with all the testimony look to the person of Jesus and say, "No, I don't think he's really the answer"? You see, you and I today are actually in the same position that Jesus was in in John 5, we're completely numerically outnumbered. There were more people in John 5 that refused him than received him and today you and I find ourselves in the statistical minority. There are fewer people who believe and receive in Jesus than those who reject him, which causes us at times to take a step back and say are we sure that we're right? It causes us to step back and say are we sure that we really know what we're talking about? Not only does the witness more than what was ever required, but according to Daniel 2, the one whom we've believed on, the one whom we've received for the forgiveness of our sins, the salvation of our soul, there is a day coming – listen to this – where all of the pundits and all of those who claim to have a corner on information and truth, according to Daniel 2, Jesus is going to take it out completely and you and I one day will be subject face-to-face with the one whom we've either rejected or whom we've received.

And today we've got a very important question to ask ourselves: can we honestly look in the spiritual mirror and say, "I know more than God"? Can we look in the spiritual mirror and say, "It doesn't matter how many testimonies there are, I still think that my answer is right"? Are we willing to look back on thousands of years of history and say, "It doesn't matter what's been said or done, I still think that I'm right"? Today let me encourage you, let me invoke you to the testimony of Jesus, to the witness that is twice as much, and if you're in that place today, in that position today of hopefully realizing that what you need to do is not fight who Jesus is but you need to submit to who Jesus is and believe that he is the only answer, not just to your sin problem but to the need for you to be forgiven of all the mess in your life, today you're forced to make a decision. Either receive the abundance of testimony or refuse it based on the fact that you think that you know just a little bit more.

Let's pray together with our heads bowed, our eyes closed. You know, maybe you're that person today, maybe you're that individual who for years and possibly even decades, has been fighting against the things of God and the person of God. I've got great news for you today: this can be the day where you're set free. This can be the day that you're forgiven. This can be the day for the first time in your entire life that all those efforts and endeavors can come to a very important climax in the person of Jesus Christ. You don't have to jump through religious hoops, you don't have to check off boxes, you just need to have a very serious sincere conversation with God. You don't have to say the same words that I would say, you don't even have to say these words out loud but maybe your conversation would go a little something like this, "God, today I realize that I need to quit fighting. God, I realize today I need to come to an understanding that I'm the problem and that you're the answer. God, today I realize for the very first time that I've got a sin problem that only Jesus can address and so I'm coming very honest, I'm coming very transparent, and I'm asking you to forgive me, I'm asking you to save me, not based on my own endeavors or my own efforts but based on the blood of Jesus Christ alone. Lord, today I submit myself to Jesus. I call on you to forgive me and save me. In the best way I know how, I just want to turn my life over to you."

With our heads still bowed and our eyes still closed, maybe you're that person today. Maybe you're that person today who realized for the first time your desperate need for Jesus. We'd just love to have a conversation with you. Or maybe you're that person today who that's already taken place in your life but you need to follow in believers' baptism, or maybe you need to be a part of this incredible church. Whatever the decision is, all we'd love to do is have a conversation and engage with you about what God is doing in your life.

Let's pray together.

Lord, we come in this place, our eyes are closed, our heads are bowed and we are submitting to your leadership in our life. Lord, I know that you've called some to salvation, you've called others to obedience. God, you may be calling some to go, whatever it may be. We just want to do with our feet what you've already done in our hearts and so, God, right now we yield to you, we surrender to you, and we ask that you guide and direct this time of response. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

I'm going to ask you to stand with me. As you stand with me, we're going to have an opportunity to respond, whatever that is at this moment.