

John Devotional: April 22-27

EYEWITNESS TESTIMONY

“This is the disciple who is bearing witness about these things, and who has written these things, and we know that his testimony is true” (John 21:24, ESV).

“but these are written so 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 20:31, ESV).

I've heard of all sorts of eyewitness accounts that either I don't bother to believe or to which I don't pay much attention. Maybe it would rock my world to believe that Sasquatches really do roam the forests or Nessie glides through the dark depths of a lake in Scotland or Elvis still makes the occasional special appearance, but if I were to learn that the eyewitnesses who make these claims are telling the truth, I would be astonished, but I don't think my day-to-day life would change drastically. However, if I were someday called to be on a jury, then determining the truth or falsehood of an alleged eyewitness account could be a matter of life or death. To someone. In that case, it should be of vital importance to me which way I decide.

John 21:24 and 20:31 tell us the reason the author of the book put pen to parchment to record his memories of Jesus' life. He was writing what he had seen and heard and writing to convince people that Jesus is the Messiah and the Son of God—in fact, God Himself. Is his testimony in the Sasquatch/Nessie/Elvis camp where he makes some startling claims, but, meh—they shouldn't have to matter much to us, millennia after the fact? Or is his testimony in the courtroom category with ourselves in the jury box—where we'd better sit up and pay attention and take accurate notes and sift carefully through the evidence.

If John wasn't telling the truth, then, of course, what he said about Jesus doesn't matter. And by refusing to even consider the evidence for John's eyewitness testimony as potentially important, the apathetic show that they, by default, don't believe it. They sort it into my category of Sasquatches, Nessie, and Elvis. I can't be bothered to examine the eyewitness evidence because I've written these things off as too weird to be true. But some very strange truths are *true*, however strange they may be. If John is telling the truth, what then? What's really at stake in deciding if John was telling the truth about Jesus and who He was? Let's examine some of the statements of Jesus to which John testified to see if the evidence really must be taken seriously and considered further.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it” (1:1-5). John is writing about Jesus here, letting us in on his startling discovery that Jesus *is* God, the Creator of the universe. Yep! That God! He made every one of us. Real life is found only in him. And then John opens up the subject of evil by his allusion to “darkness.” Evil matters! Serial killings and school shootings and terrorist attacks matter! Even our own little contributions to the dark side matter. Broken relationships and broken hearts and broken lives matter! *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil” (3:16-19).* Our default position is condemnation. Of all the broken relationships that matter most, our contributions to the dark side have broken our relationships with a perfect God who has no darkness in Him and cannot have darkness dwelling with Him. And the condemnation is that we stay right where we are, out of relationship with the Source of our life, contributing to the dark side. And here Jesus introduces the subject that whatever state we choose in life becomes permanent someday. On the one side is eternal life (and He came up victorious out of the grave to prove He had to right to tell us about this eternal life). On the other is eternal death—the “perish”ing of John 3:16. Our lives do not end when our bodies do. Either we have life in Jesus, or we go on disbelieving that He can possibly matter to us and trying to figure it out on our own. But John doesn't leave us with the option of Jesus not mattering. His Gospel sticks us right squarely front and centre in the jury box and asks us to make up our minds about his eyewitness testimony.