

John 15: Jesus' "Viability" Theology

The Culpability & Corroborating Paradigm

John 15.22-25

22 If I had not come and spoken to them,
they would not be guilty of sin;
but now they have no excuse for their sin.

23 Whoever hates me hates my Father as well.

24 If I had not done among them the works no one else did,
they would not be guilty of sin.

As it is, they have seen,

and yet they have hated both me and my Father.

25 But this is to fulfill what is written in their Law:

'They hated me without reason.'

Credibility and Culpability

“If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin.”

They said, “Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, ‘I came down from heaven’?” (JOHN 6.42)

- ❖ A central factor in any trial is the credibility of a witness. For his entire ministry, the Jews have been disputing the credibility of Jesus and his reputability as a witness:
 - ▶ *The Pharisees challenged him, “Here you are, appearing as your own witness; your testimony is not valid.” (8.13)*
 - ▶ *The Jews answered him, “Aren’t we right in saying that you are a Samaritan and demon-possessed?” (8.48)*
- ❖ No authenticity of testimony ever had higher stakes than this question of Jesus’ *coming from.*

- ❖ In response to the Jews disputing his credibility as a witness, Jesus responded:
“Even if I testify on my own behalf, my testimony is valid, for I know where I came from and where I am going. But you have no idea where I come from or where I am going. You judge by human standards; I pass judgment on no one. But if I do judge, my decisions are true, because I am not alone. I stand with the Father, who sent me.” (8.14-16)
- ❖ Always in dispute was the credibility of Jesus’ background. The Jews dismissively minimized him as from “Nazareth” and “the carpenter’s son” or denigrated him as a Samaritan who was demon-possessed. The fact was, that despite the evidence of credibility before them, the Jews were so prejudiced by their own self-credibility that they could not and would not acknowledge the greater credibility of the *One-who-had-come*. This arrogance was clearly on display as they interrogated the blind man whom Jesus had healed—a miracle unknown in human history:
“You were steeped in sin at birth; how dare you lecture us!” And they threw him out. (9.34)

❖ Again the issue was “background credibility”—

“We are disciples of Moses! We know that God spoke to Moses, but as for this fellow, we don’t even know where he comes from.” (9.28-29)

❖ This disputation of Jesus’ background (and, therefore, his credibility) took place after the previous disagreement between Jesus and the Jews where they had refused to accept his testimony about himself:

“You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am he, you will indeed die in your sins.”

“Who are you?” they asked.

“Just what I have been telling you from the beginning,” Jesus replied. “I have much to say in judgment of you. But he who sent me is trustworthy, and what I have heard from him I tell the world.” (8.23-26)

- ❖ In his prologue, the Apostle John had clearly defined the background credibility of Jesus, setting forth what Jesus himself declared about his *coming from*—
 - ▶ The Word existed with God in the beginning (P1)
 - ▶ The Word became flesh to give testimony of God (P14, 18; 1 John 1.2)
- ❖ Jesus unequivocally claimed that the God who the Jews acknowledged as Lawgiver and Covenant-Maker was, in fact, his Father, and he was the Father's "One-and-Only Authorized Representative" —

In his defense Jesus said to them, "My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I too am working." For this reason they tried all the more to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God. (JOHN 5.17-18)

Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I have come here from God. I have not come on my own; God sent me." (JOHN 8.42)

❖ Furthermore, Jesus claimed that the Law was ultimately about him and that he was the *Fulfiller-and-Fulfillment* of the Law—

“This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.” (LUKE 24.44)

In a damning indictment of the Jews, Jesus declared—

“I have testimony weightier than that of John. For the works that the Father has given me to finish—the very works that I am doing—testify that the Father has sent me. And the Father who sent me has himself testified concerning me. You have never heard his voice nor seen his form, nor does his word dwell in you, for you do not believe the one he sent. You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life.” (JOHN 5.36-40)

- ❖ What Jesus has now said to his disciples is nothing less than a prosecutor's closing argument, one that establishes the guilt or acquittal of not only the Jews but everyone, based on their acceptance of the "One-who-has-come" —

If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin. Whoever hates me hates my Father as well. If I had not done among them the works no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin. As it is, they have seen, and yet they have hated both me and my Father. But this is to fulfill what is written in their Law: 'They hated me without reason.'

- ❖ It is significant for us to note the contrast between the two halves of this chapter: to be "in him" is to be at odds with the world; to be chosen by Jesus is to be hated by the world; to see the world's rejection of Jesus and his message means anticipation of their rejection of us. Just as Jesus was the corroborating testimony of the Father, so we are to be his corroborating testimony (see verse 27; cf. Luke 24.46-48).

Corroborating Testimony

“If I had not done among them the works no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin. As it is, they have seen, and yet they have hated both me and my Father.”

Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him. (5.22-23)

- ❖ We have previously studied the “seamless indivisibility” that exists between the Father and Jesus: the Father shapes the very expression of Jesus’ words (12.49); the Son only does what he sees the Father doing (5.19); Jesus does not speak or act on his own authority, *“Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing His work”* (14.10). When the Apostle John writes that: *We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth* (P14), he is setting forth a truth of profound dimensions: everything that defines God the Father—holiness, truth, love, mercy—is true of the Son; even more, it is set forth as grace and truth.

- ❖ As the exact representation of the Father, Jesus was “truth”—a visible, impeccable presence of God the Lawgiver’s holiness, and a perfect fulfillment of what God meant when He underscored obedience to His commands with the statement:

“Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy.” (LEVITICUS 19.2)

- ❖ In their arrogance, the Jews had done what all of humanity is guilty of doing: substituting our own “right-ness” and taking offense when told that we are unacceptably wrong. Thus, Jesus, who was the embodiment of the Law and the holiness of God would say: *“But this is to fulfill what is written in their Law: ‘They hated me without reason.’”*
- ❖ Because truth, that is God’s holiness, is humanly unattainable, Jesus came as the Father’s provision of grace: *“born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship”* (Galatians 4.4-5)—the fulfillment of truth from the Father and the provision of grace for all who would believe and receive him.

❖ The Apostle Paul powerfully presented this truth in his letter to the Romans:

Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. Therefore no one will be declared righteous in God's sight by the works of the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin. But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished—he did it to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus. (ROMANS 3.19-26)

❖ In Jesus, the Father was revealing His truth and His grace. Through Jesus, the Father was offering the only way possible for humanity to have a right and reconciled relationship with Him. This was the mission of Jesus as the Father's *One-and-Only-Authorized-Representative*. In fulfilling the Law and becoming hated without cause, he became the Father's guilt offering on behalf of all who would believe and receive him. But for all who would reject him, there was no other alternative because—

“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. . . . If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin. . . . As it is, they have seen, and yet they have hated both me and my Father.” (14.6-7; 15.22, 24b)

❖ What is our corroborating testimony, both in words and works? No less is at stake than when Jesus came from the Father, for he has sent us as the Father sent him (20.21-22), to testify so that the world would believe and have life in the only Name (20.31; Acts 4.13).