

John 5:45

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust.

Analysis

Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust. Jesus delivers a devastating indictment: the very Scriptures the Jewish leaders claimed as their foundation would become their accuser. The Greek *mē dokeite* (μὴ δοκεῖτε, "do not think") warns against a false assumption—that Jesus would serve as prosecutor at the final judgment.

The word *katēgorēsō* (κατηγορήσω, "I will accuse") is future tense, referring to eschatological judgment. Jesus surprises His hearers: He won't need to accuse them because *estin ho katēgorōn hymōn Mōusēs* (ἔστιν ὁ κατηγορῶν ὑμῶν Μωϋσῆς, "there is the one accusing you, Moses")—present tense, indicating ongoing accusation. The very Torah they studied, memorized, and claimed to obey becomes their judge.

The phrase *eis hon hymeis ēlpikate* (εἰς ὅν ὑμεῖς ἐλπίκατε, "in whom you have set your hope") exposes the tragic irony: they trusted in Moses' writings for salvation while simultaneously rejecting Moses' testimony about Christ (v. 46). Perfect tense *ēlpikate* indicates an established, ongoing trust that has become misplaced. Their confidence in Moses without obedience to Moses condemned them. This principle applies universally: Scripture rightly understood leads to Christ; Scripture misused becomes an accuser. The Word of God is either our advocate (when we believe its testimony about Jesus) or our accuser (when we claim it while rejecting Christ).

Historical Context

Moses held unparalleled authority in first-century Judaism. The Torah (Pentateuch) formed the foundation of Jewish identity, law, and worship. Rabbinic tradition taught "Moses received the Torah from Sinai" (Pirke Avot 1:1), establishing an unbroken chain of authoritative interpretation. The synagogue liturgy centered on Torah reading; scribes devoted lifetimes to copying it precisely; scholars memorized vast portions.

The phrase "in whom you trust" reflects deep theological confidence. Jews saw themselves as "disciples of Moses" (John 9:28). The Torah represented God's revealed will, Israel's covenant charter, and the path to righteousness. Possession of God's written law distinguished Israel from Gentile nations (Romans 2:17-20). The reverence for Moses extended to elaborate traditions about his prophetic supremacy, his unique intimacy with God (Numbers 12:6-8), and his role as Israel's ultimate mediator and lawgiver.

However, by Jesus' time, a gap had emerged between Torah reverence and Torah obedience. The Mishnah (compiled later but reflecting first-century traditions) records extensive debates about minutiae while often missing Scripture's heart. Jesus confronted this disconnect: they honored Moses with their lips while their hearts rejected the Messiah Moses prophesied. Archaeological discoveries of phylacteries and mezuzot from this period confirm outward Torah devotion, while the Gospels reveal spiritual blindness to its fulfillment in Christ. This historical context makes Jesus' accusation especially pointed—their very source of confidence becomes their condemnation.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How might we be trusting in biblical knowledge, theological education, or religious heritage while missing Christ Himself?
2. In what ways does Scripture become our accuser rather than our advocate when we fail to embrace its testimony about Jesus?
3. What does this verse teach us about the relationship between Old Testament law and New Testament grace?
4. How should this warning shape our approach to Bible study—what are we ultimately seeking when we read Scripture?
5. What specific areas of our theology or practice might we be defending with Scripture while actually contradicting its intent and testimony?

Interlinear Text

μὴ δοκεῖτε ὅτι ἐγὼ κατηγορῶν ὑμῶν πρὸς τὸν
not Do that I one that accuseth you to G3588
G3361 G1380 G3754 G1473 G2723 G5216 G4314

πατέρα· ἔστιν ὁ κατηγορῶν ὑμῶν Μωσῆς, εἰς ὃν
the Father there is G3588 one that accuseth you even Moses in whom
G3962 G2076 G2723 G5216 G3475 G1519 G3739

ὑμεῖς ἡλπίκατε
ye trust
G5210 G1679

Additional Cross-References

Galatians 3:10 (Parallel theme): For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.

Romans 2:12 (Parallel theme): For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law;

