

November 19, 2017
Sunday Evening Service
Series: 1 John
Community Baptist Church
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Greer, SC 29650
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TESTIMONY ABOUT JESUS 1 John 5:6-12

We come now to not only the most difficult passage in 1 John, but one of the most difficult passages in the Bible to interpret. What did John mean when he wrote that Jesus came by water and by blood? And to make matters worse, some English translations have a reference to the Trinity in verse seven while others don't. Which is correct? Why the difference?

This argument is one of the most important points in John's letter. It is almost a watershed. The entire letter argues against those who went out from the fellowship of the Christians because they were not really born again. That is why the letter is replete with arguments that prove the reality of the new birth. Being born again comes down to the fact that we really do believe that Christ is exactly who He claimed to be and that He came to do exactly what He said He came to do.

Now sympathize with the recipients of this letter. They were first century believers in an assembly located in the center of pagan Gentile culture. The Gentiles rejected Jesus of Nazareth out of hand as a rabble rouser or a martyr who failed in his cause to overthrow the Roman government. The Jews rejected Jesus as a liar and fraud who tried to steal the loyalty of the Jewish people away from the well-established religious leaders and their system. Most recently (in John's life), people who considered themselves to be the owners of the greater wisdom concluded that salvation was not through Jesus at all. Rather, Jesus was just another man who possessed some special, divine-like characteristics for a period of time before He was killed on the cross.

Which of these arguments for rejecting Jesus is not common in the world today? People still have a myriad of theories and ideas about Jesus. People still reject what they consider to be a too strict belief in what the Bible says about Jesus. But God still testifies that Jesus of Nazareth was His beloved Son. That Jesus, the man, was actually God the Son, come to earth to win eternal salvation from sin for those who believe Him. In the final analysis, we either believe God's testimony or we perish forever. It seems that God's testimony about His Son is very important.

God's Testimony of Jesus (vv.6-9).

The Spirit testifies that Jesus came by water and blood. That statement in and of itself will generate some questions in our minds. But, even before we go there, for a moment we need to address the elephant in the room. If you are using a KJV, at this point you will be well aware of one of the major arguments in the KJV vs. Not KJV debate.

This point of debate is often referred to as the Johannine comma. As a quick reminder, let's establish the fact that there are approximately 5,338 Greek manuscripts of the New Testament extant in part or in whole, as well as hundreds of ancient translations and over 8,000 copies of the Latin Vulgate. But there is not one original manuscript. That massive amount of evidence are all copies of the originals. The oldest of the copies is a fragment of John's gospel dated about 125 (only about 30 years after John wrote). But the majority of the copies of the New Testament manuscripts are from the years 1000 to 1500—which means a lot of copies being made and lots of opportunity for mistakes or variations.

When we speak of Greek Texts, we are generally referring to entire texts of the New Testament (Matthew-Revelation) that were compiled by comparing the evidence of the ancient copies. There are basically two families or groups of these Greek Texts. One group is what might be referred to as the Majority text, which is the basis of the KJV. This was the text Erasmus compiled in 1516 based on Greek manuscripts and evidence from the 12th, 13th and 15th centuries. Erasmus's compilation is called the Textus Receptus or the TR.

Then there is the Critical text which is the basis for ESV, NAS, NIV and most modern English translations of the New Testament. This is a compilation based on all the textual evidence available. While scholars compared all the evidence, where they found discrepancies between the younger majority texts and the older texts they generally leaned more heavily on the older manuscripts, fragments, and translations from 2nd - 5th centuries. That is why this compilation of the Greek text is often referred to as the Older Text.

Now consider the difference in our translations. In the KJV the verses in question read, (7) *For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.* (8) *And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.*

This rendition of the Greek text is found in only eight Greek manuscripts but not in any of the other hundreds of Greek manuscripts of 1 John. One of the eight manuscripts that contains this reading is dated in the 14th century, six are dated in the 15th century, and one is dated in the 18th century. Of the eight manuscripts, four of them have the reading in the margin, not in the text itself. In fact, Erasmus left this statement out of his first Greek New Testament but was attacked for removing a statement about the Trinity.

In contrast, to the KJV the ESV reads, (7) *For there are three that testify:* (8) *the Spirit and the water and the blood; and these three agree.* We can readily see that the difference is that the KJV adds a statement about the Trinity in heaven, that is the Father, the Word (Son), and the Holy Spirit. Again the statement in the KJV verse seven is, *For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.* In short, it says that the Trinity testifies regarding Jesus Christ.

Conversely, the ESV simply states that the Spirit, the water, and the blood agree regarding the testimony of Jesus Christ. As often is the case in these kinds of discrepancies, what seems to be missing in one place shows up in another. We can notice in the larger context of this statement in John's letter that there is really no difference in the argument. Both text families state that Jesus Christ came by water and blood (v.6a). Both state that the Holy Spirit is true and testifies about Jesus coming (v.6b). The ESV argues that there are three that

testify regarding Jesus (v.7). What are the three? The Spirit, the water and the blood (v.8).

Yes, but what about the testimony of God the Father and God the Son that the KJV includes in verse seven? According to the ESV and the KJV, God's (can we assume that is the Father?) testimony is greater than man's testimony and we ought to accept it (v.9, 10). So the Father's testimony is addressed. Also, John stated earlier that we must believe the testimony of Christ that He is come in the flesh (4:2). So what do the additional words add? Nothing. It would appear that nothing is gained. The message of God through John in both texts is the same.

I have a weakness that I struggle with. I am learning to have victory over this problem, but I still hate it. The problem is that I can hear something or see something and then begin to connect it to something else I heard or saw. Before long I have connected the dots and allowed circumstantial evidence to create a case that really does not exist. The problem was that those were not dots I was connecting. They were floaters in my eye. As a result, I create a picture that does not exist. That is what some people want to do with this discrepancy between old manuscript evidence and young manuscript evidence.

Having described the elephant, now let's consider that important truth of the passage. First, we need to accept the Spirit's testimony. Jesus Christ came by water and blood. *This is he who came by water and blood – Jesus Christ; not by the water only but by the water and the blood (v.6a).*

This argument is about *he who came*. It is about the incarnation, God the Son becoming man in order to redeem breakers of God's law from the penalty of sin. This argument addresses the conflict between the people who left the church and those who were part of the true Church. It would appear that both parties agreed that Jesus came by the water. It's nice the parties agreed, but what in the world does that mean?

God affirmed Christ coming into the world as Jesus with water baptism. Jesus came to John the Baptist to be baptized (Matthew 3:13). John the Baptist resisted, saying, *"I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" (v.14).* Jesus responded, *"Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (v.15).* The result was God the Father's testimony about God the Son. *And when*

Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:16-17).

Apparently, even the heretics agreed that God the Father affirmed Jesus as the Christ at His baptism by water. But now we come to the point of disagreement. John argued that Jesus also came by the blood. This is where the heretics became heretics (*hairitikos* – factious, dividing). They claimed that the “Christ Spirit” descended on Jesus the man at his baptism, but left before He was crucified. Does that matter? Boy does it ever! If Jesus died as a mere man, sinners still have no atonement for their sins. That means that each sinner must do something to win salvation from God, which can only mean salvation by works. This is the heresy of nearly all false religions still.

Did God the Father actually testify that Jesus was the Christ at His death when He “came by the blood”? I think so. How else do you explain the supernatural darkness from noon until three? What about Jesus’ promise that the penitent thief would be with Him in paradise? What about Jesus’ cry, “My God, why have You forsaken me?” How do you explain the earthquake at that moment and dead saints getting out of their graves and walking around? How did the massive curtain in the temple shred at the precise moment of Christ’s death . . . and why? Those were all words and events steeped in God’s authority alone. God the Father most certainly testified that Jesus is the Christ when He came by blood.

Therefore, it only stands to reason that the Spirit also testifies regarding Jesus. *And the Spirit is the one who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth (v.6b)*. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth because all that He says and does is true and He is the source of truth (even as are all three members of the Trinity). The Spirit testified in all truth that Jesus is the Christ at His conception. What did the angel promise Mary? *And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy – the Son of God" (Luke 1:35)*. The Spirit testified that Jesus is the Christ during His baptism.

And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him (Matthew 3:16). The Spirit testified that Jesus is the Christ during His temptation. *The Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness (Mark 1:12)*.

The Spirit also testified that Jesus is the Christ during His entire earthly ministry. Peter preached about Jesus saying, *"How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him" (Acts 10:38)*.

The testimony of the Spirit and of the water and of the blood all agree. *For there are three that testify: the Spirit and the water and the blood; and these three agree (vv.7-8)*. John simply drew together the evidence he has just established. Jesus of Nazareth was declared to be the Christ at His water baptism. Jesus of Nazareth was declared to be the Christ at His crucifixion by shedding of blood. In all these God the Holy Spirit declared that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ.

That leaves the doubter with a very serious matter to decide. God’s testimony is greater than human testimony. Arguing from the lesser to the greater, John affirmed that we accept human testimony. *If we receive the testimony of men (v.9a)*. John was right. We do receive the testimony of men. We must because God’s law requires as much. *On the evidence of two witnesses or of three witnesses the one who is to die shall be put to death; a person shall not be put to death on the evidence of one witness (Deuteronomy 17:6)*.

Because God’s law requires acceptance of human testimony, most cultures adopt laws with the same requirement. Although it doesn’t seem to work out much like that in our culture. There was a time when no one in the American culture was convicted on the basis of a witness. The rule once was that everyone is considered innocent until proven guilty. That was before the godless, infidel media took control of the culture. Now when the media testifies against an innocent person, their testimony is received and the person is judged guilty. And when the media testifies in favor of a guilty person, their testimony is received and the person is exonerated even if he was guilty of driving drunk and killing an innocent woman when he drove

into a river. The fact that we receive the testimony of men is sometimes painfully true.

But God's testimony is greater than any man's testimony. *The testimony of God is greater, for this is the testimony of God that he has borne concerning his Son (v.9b)*. God testified that Jesus is the Christ at His baptism, throughout His ministry, and at His crucifixion. We receive the testimony of mere men even when they are lying. But we reject God's testimony which is greater? Surely the angels in heaven are dumbfounded by the gross stubbornness and stupidity of humanity!

Faith's Testimony of Jesus (vv.10-12).

God's testimony is critical (v.10). People who are truly believers have God's testimony. *Whoever believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself (v.10a)*. If you are believing that Jesus is all that the Bible says He is, you have a testimony within you. How does that work? First, you are indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God who continues to testify about Jesus being the Christ (John 15:26). Second, you have the Word of Christ dwelling in you that testifies about Jesus being the Christ (Colossians 3:16). Third, you have God's gift of faith within your heart.

Unbelievers, on the other hand, make God to be a liar. *Whoever does not believe God has made him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has borne concerning his Son (v.10b)*. God has clearly and obviously borne testimony concerning Jesus being the Christ, God's Son. Therefore, choosing not to believe the testimony is not an insignificant matter.

Not believing God's testimony has to take into account that God is God. He spoke all things into existence. He has revealed His power and His position in undeniable proofs. He has the power to speak all things out of existence and recreate them with a word. He has promised that He will send all who doubt Him and reject Him to the lake of fire where they will suffer unimaginable pain and terror forever. It is not wise to call this one-and-only true God a liar. Not to accept His testimony, His word, is to do just that.

And this is God's testimony (vv.11-12). God gave eternal life through Christ! John wrote, *And this is the testimony, that God gave*

us eternal life, and this life is in his Son (v.11). We have the testimony of the Holy Spirit, the Word, and faith dwelling in us because God gave us eternal life. The threefold irrefutable testimony came when God regenerated us through the Holy Spirit. Born again people are so sure about God's testimony about Jesus that we will die rather than recant the truth.

That is a wonderful plan. But are we living like we believe God's testimony? If we trust Christ we should be, because we have *this life in His Son* right now. It is not that we have confidence in eternity because we are so sure of what we believe. Rather we believe because God gave us eternal life, and of that we are fully confident.

Having the Son makes the eternal difference. *Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life (v.12)*. The verse simply means that to have the Son is to have life. What a wonderful way to state this amazing truth. It is not just that I know Christ, or even know something about Christ. Because God has given me eternal life, I have Christ. I possess Him. He is mine, because I am His. Unbelievers have never been able to grasp this astonishing truth. Jesus told the skeptics in His day, *"Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him"* (John 6:56). Most of them quit following at that point.

But we who believe Christ know that having the Son is our life's blood, our resource for living. We understand and experience what Jesus taught when He said, *"I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing"* (John 15:5).

It is an amazing relationship that is much like the relationship between the Father and the Son. Speaking of His amazing works, Jesus said, *"But if I do them [works], even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father"* (John 10:38).

Standing in vivid contrast to our relationship with Christ are those who do not believe God's testimony. *Whoever does not have the Son does not have life*. You live among spiritually dead people. They cannot live like Christ because they are not attached to the Vine. They speak about Christ but do not know Christ. Therefore, serious differences must come to surface as you relate to them and associate

with them. Worse is the fact that spiritually dead people today do not have any hope for eternity. They will exist in eternal spiritual death.

God's testimony is clear. It is not that God needs to do more, say more, prove more about Jesus of Nazareth being the Christ. We only need to believe God's testimony. Strange that we will receive the testimony of fellow humans but not God's testimony. That is why false religion is always more popular than truth. Be confident, be assured, be encouraged that trusting God's testimony results in eternal life.