



Speaker:
Paul Forrest

The Water and the Blood

◀ Series: John's Letters • 12 of 15 ▶

3/22/2020 (SUN) | Bible: **1 John 5:6-12**

The Apostle John writes to believers at a crucial time in history. It is a time when the darkness of one way of God's dealings with man was passing away and a brand-new age was being ushered in: the gospel age. The Gospel Age, which is spoken of in such glorious, portentous language. Revelation pictures this new church as the New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven to earth. It describes it also in Revelation as a new heavens and a new earth. Truly glorious language for this Kingdom age that we live in.

The aged John, then, writes to fellow citizens of Zion. The key themes we've seen so far? Well, Jesus Christ is one person with two natures. He is God the son, incarnate. Denial of this makes someone antichrist, and denial is either confessing the error or not being a witness for Jesus Christ. True believers can be identified by loving and obeying God, witnessing to others about Christ, and having a sacrificial love for the brethren. And the other great thing we came across was that Jesus Christ is both our *propitiation*—that is, our sacrifice—and our *advocate*, our representative in the very courts of heaven.

Today then we're going to look at verses 6 to 12 from the fifth chapter of 1 John. Straight away, we'll look into this theme of water and blood. Verse 6: Jesus Christ came by water and blood. It even emphasizes it by saying, "Not *just* by water, but by blood also."

Now this idea of the water and the blood in 1 John has traditionally been difficult to interpret. I would not have you thinking that this is something negative—that when we come across something difficult in scripture, this is a bad thing. *But brother, if only it was much clearer.* Friends, if God wanted his word to be a simple record of something come down from heaven, a set of rules maybe, a set of guidelines, and he also preserves that and makes sure every member of the human race gets it, that's one way of working; but that's not how he works. He's given us a book. And he's given *us* a book. He hasn't given everyone this book. And he's given it us in the form of history and poetry and theological letters from one church to another. And in all this we come across things which are not so clear. (You might rightly argue that if we were closer to God and had more of his Spirit, we would be able to understand all these things.)

Well, I suspect God has done this so that we are forced to go digging in his word. Because had he written a Bible that everyone on the planet could immediately understand at first glance, there would be no work involved. And yet now we come to this, and we go digging. And we dig. And on the way to that supreme gem that we are searching for—the proper interpretation of the verse—we come across other things on the way. We come across other gems, if you like. And so it's through this necessary process of hard work, hard Bible study, that we are greatly blessed. How great it is after hours of study, days or weeks even, to make a discovery—for God to suddenly reveal something, give you some light on the scriptures. It's one of the most blessed things a Christian can experience. So we're glad that we have to work hard.

So here there are numerous interpretations, numerous explanations, of what the water and blood could be. But why would there be so many interpretations?

1. Firstly, water is used throughout scripture. Water is found all over scripture, and the references to it can be literal—for example, the Jordan River separating—or it could be symbolic, sometimes representing affliction, for example.
2. It's the same with blood. The references to blood can be literal. For example, in a battle, blood is shed. But also symbolic. The Bible says that we are all made of “one blood”, describing the Christian view that there are no separate races, but one human race. We're of the same blood.
3. There are also scriptures where water and blood are used in the same place. So, for example, in Revelation we see the water of the sea being turned to blood. So we have those, and then we can have combinations of any reference of water combined with any reference to blood. So someone could come up with maybe a thousand different explanations of what the water and the blood is. You could combine the two and say that the water and blood means chaos and war. And so you could go on forever.

So we need to narrow this down. Straight away we can discard most of those combinations. We can strip away 90% of them. Then, we could delve into some commentaries and get ourselves up to speed on the church's thinking for the past 2000 years. Most importantly, we can look at context.

- The words “water” and “blood” are part of a sentence
- That sentence is part of a verse
- The verse itself is part of the chapter
- The chapter is part of the book of 1 John
- This book itself is a part of the writings of John, his gospel and his apocalypse
- And then of course, if you step right back, you're reminded that the largest context of all is the word of God as a whole.

And so what do we do? Well we try to consider the scope of this letter. We've said that the letter is all about Jesus, and it's against heresy: principally this heresy of Cerinthus, the heresy of Docetism which says that Jesus and Christ are two separate people.

Let's look at the train of thought as well. Look in verses 8 and 11. It says there are three that bear witness: the spirit the water and the blood. Three witnesses. And what is their testimony? What are they witnessing about? Two things, found in verse 11: firstly, eternal life; secondly that this eternal life is found only through the Son of God, Jesus Christ. Therefore it leads us to say that the water and blood testimony must in some way endorse the person and the work of Jesus Christ. And this leads us towards one interpretation that is superior to the others: that is that **the water refers to Jesus Christ's baptism and the blood refers to his death.**

Therefore it is not just by baptism that he fulfilled his mission; the death was part of it. And Cerinthus was wrong: Christ did not depart from Jesus at Calvary leaving him to his fate. There's no such thing as two separate people. It is the one person who died on that cross. It was Jesus Christ the son of God in flesh.

No doubt Toplady agreed with this. In his *Rock of Ages* he said:

*Rock of Ages, cleft for me; let me hide myself in thee. Let the **water and the blood**, from thy riven side which flowed, be of sin the **double cure: save me from its guilt and power.***

The blood removing our guilt, and the water representing the spirit and his cleansing, sanctifying effect on us as believers.

So the three witnesses then: the Spirit, the water and the blood. For the Spirit, have a look at John 15:26. John, writing in the fifteenth chapter of his gospel, verse 26, says "But when the Comforter is come whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of Truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me."

And then the other two witnesses. Look at the events surrounding the baptism. Look at Matthew 3, in verses 16 and 17. Referring to the witness of the water it says, "And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water, and lo the heavens were opened unto him; and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting upon him, and lo a voice from heaven saying 'This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.'"

And then for the blood we can have a look at Matthew 27, verse 50: "Jesus when he had cried again with a loud voice yielded up the ghost. And behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom, and the earth did quake and the rocks rent, and their graves were opened. (And many bodies of the saints which slept arose and came out of the graves after his resurrection and went into the holy city and appeared unto many.) Now when the centurion and they that were with him watching Jesus saw the earthquake and those things that were done, they feared greatly saying 'Truly, this was the son of God.'"

We have there three witnesses, fulfilling that requirement of the Old Testament in Deuteronomy when we are told that at the mouth of two witnesses or even better at the mouth of three witnesses shall the matter be established. Verse 9 says, *Never mind the witness of men; the witness of God is greater.* And so yes, we have people confessing Jesus is the Son of God but God *himself* witnesses. He's at his baptism. He's there, sending tremors throughout Jerusalem after the death of Jesus, aftershocks from the great earthquake that the Father had sent into the soul of Jesus. God's witness is greater.

And what are these three things testifying about? They are testifying that we, God's people, have eternal life. Just like that thief on the cross who was told of his future in paradise, we too have the very same promise of an everlasting, glorious, Edenic, paradise of God. Job tells us of his hope. He knew that although he would die and just be eaten by worms, there was nevertheless a day coming when he would see his redeemer. He would stand on his own two feet in his new flesh and see God face to face.

What else is being testified about? Not just that we have eternal life, but this unimaginable gift is only gained through Jesus Christ, God's son. It tells us in Acts 4 and verse 12, "Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." If a man or woman wants to escape God's terrible judgment at the return of Jesus Christ, it must be through Jesus Christ himself. No one else can help.

Verse 12, friends: "He that has the son has life." Do *you* have the Son? **Do you have the Son?** If you do, eternal life is guaranteed. **It is guaranteed.**

I know that especially now, in these strange times we live in, where this God-sent virus is spreading out all over the world, people are fearful. And some *believers* are fearful. They're fearful of death. And we might like to think that they're fearful of the *process* of death. We might like to think that they're fearful only of leaving others behind, but that they really want to be with Jesus.

I suspect sadly that in some cases it's simply a lack of faith. If you have very little faith, then you will have very little faith that you will live again. You will maybe believe it as a faint hope, but not look

forward to the world to come like it was, say, the holiday of a lifetime. Looking forward to it so much you can't wait for it to happen!

Faith is what we need. I pray for you all that you have that faith that would increase and increase to the point that what is so commonly a weak faith would become an absolute certainty in our minds and in the minds of all believers.

- That we will have less love of this world
- That we will have more urgency in bearing witness
- That we would be more determined to get along with the co-heirs of eternal life, our brethren
- That we might have great faith that the world to come was a reality just ahead of us
- That we would have greater joy at the prospect of such a sinless future
- And that we would in the meantime be utterly consecrated in the service of the one who purchased it for us: the beautiful Lord Jesus Christ

As I was preparing this message, I was confronted with the remembrance of other references to water and blood. And I pursued this, I became constrained to share some of these thoughts with you—whether that constraint was of the Spirit or of the flesh, I don't know. Well, I have to just be confident that it was of the Spirit. And so for your consideration, as an appendix to the message today, I want you to think about where water and blood is mentioned or implied in the life of Jesus. And I want us to consider what this tells us about his humanity not just his divinity.

1. We have Jesus, born into this world in the normal way. It says in Galatians chapter 4 and verse 4, “When the fullness of time was come, God sent forth his son, made of a woman, made under the law.” Born covered in the water and blood of childbirth.
2. Then in his life we see we see him. In Luke 22, verse 41, says “He was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast and kneeled down and prayed saying ‘Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless not my will but thine be done.’ And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven strengthening him, he being in agony. He prayed more earnestly and his sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground.” Water mixed with blood again as we see him travail in his life.
3. Then we see Jesus Christ's death. Let's read a small section from John 19 and verse 30. It says, “When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar he said, ‘It is finished’. And he bowed his head and gave up the ghost.” Verse 32: “Then came the soldiers and break the legs of the first and of the other which was crucified with him, but when they came to Jesus and saw that he was dead already, they break not his legs but one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side. And forthwith came there out **blood and water**.” So we see then it was a proper death.

What is the connection here? Well these three things should remind you of the connection Jesus had with Adam.

1. Firstly, Adam in his Fall made it the destiny of all his descendants after him to be born into this world through a painful process of childbirth. And every one of us therefore comes into this world covered in blood and water. And so we see Jesus identify himself as coming from the line of Adam.
2. And then in Jesus' life we see him in such inward turmoil, such travail of soul, such toil, that it harks back to that pronouncement by God that Adam would travail during his life, bringing forth food by the sweat of his brow. Sweat became the symbol of that toil that was part of the fall. Jesus worked in his ministry—that certainly counted as work. But this turmoil, this travail that he experienced in Gethsemane! **HERE, AS HE STOOD ON THE EDGE OF THE FURNACE OF**

GOD'S ANGER, HE TOOK UPON HIMSELF ALL THE SINS OF ALL HIS PEOPLE AND WAS TRULY MADE TO BE SIN FOR US. And it is in that unimaginable turmoil that he sweats to show the travail of his soul that was to culminate on the cross.

3. And finally, it was also the destiny of Adam's descendants that their lives would end. That after a life of toil their bodies would deteriorate until they came to a point where they could no longer function. Their lives would end, and they would go into the grave. And likewise we see, in some inexplicable way, Jesus Christ the Son of God in the flesh, dying.

In these three ways then, we see connections with Adam and with the results of the Fall. The water and the blood in his birth, in his life and in his death shows us that yes, he was the Divine Son of God, but he was also a real human.

Friends, do you believe this evidence today? Do you believe the threefold evidence on earth about Jesus Christ and the eternal life that he gives? If you do then praise God! For us to think otherwise would be to call God a liar.

As for us who believe, let us never, **never** stop praising God because of the great gift of eternal life in Jesus Christ.

Amen.