

God's Testimony Regarding Jesus 1 John 5:6-12

Introduction

At the end of our text last week John declares 1 John 5:4b-5

And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

He quickly transitions into why we should believe. Christian faith is not just faith in faith. *The value of your faith is the reliability of the object of your faith. If you trust in a lie, such trust does you more harm than good.* So is faith in Jesus Christ just some kind of leap in the dark, or are there solid reasons for it? The OT prophets, Christ, and His apostles are unanimous in their answer. This is no leap in the dark. The evidence is so compelling, that the harder task would be to explain why you wouldn't believe it.

OT law required two or three firsthand witnesses to establish testimony in court. John picks up on that tradition. Eight times in seven verses he will use the terms testify or testimony. We get the word *martyr* from the word he uses. Those who were witnesses regarding Jesus Christ—who gave firsthand testimony regarding Him—were so convinced

of the truth of their testimony they were willing to die rather than recant. We call them *martyrs*, and they continue to this day.

What is striking about what John presents in 1 John 5:6-12, is that the witness he calls to the stand is not a mere mortal, but God Himself: God's Testimony Regarding Jesus Christ.

⁶ This is he who came by water and blood— Jesus Christ; not by the water only but by the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the one who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. ⁷ For there are three that testify: ⁸ the Spirit and the water and the blood; and these three agree. ⁹ If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater, for this is the testimony of God that he has borne concerning his Son. ¹⁰ Whoever believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself. 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. ¹¹ And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. ¹² Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.

1. The Threefold Testimony of the Historical Record (6-8)

2. The Supreme Integrity of God as Witness (9-10)

3. The Divine Promise of Eternal Life through the Son (11-12)

1. The Threefold Testimony of the Historical Record (6-8)

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“Came by water and blood”—seems to have been well understood shorthand to John’s first-century readers, but is cryptic to us; what does this mean?

Some—the two ordinances of baptism and the Lord’s supper

Some recall that His pierced side flowed water and blood

But what fits this context best is that this refers to two significant historical events that testified to the true identity of Jesus Christ the Son of God.

His baptism and His crucifixion sum up his mission of redemption. Both events set Him apart as the unique Son of God and Savior.

His Baptism

Matthew 3:16-17

16 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; **17** and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

His Crucifixion

Matthew 27:50-54

50 And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit. **51** And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split. **52** The tombs also were opened. And many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, **53** and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many. **54** When the centurion and those who were with him, keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe and said, "Truly this was the Son of God!"

Early stages of the Gnostic heresy were already influencing people in John's later life. Docetic Gnosticism declared that Jesus only appeared to be human, but that He was spirit only. A later contemporary of John, a Gnostic heretic named Cerinthus, taught that Jesus

was just a normal human being born through the natural union of Joseph and Mary, and that the spirit of Christ descended on the man Jesus at His baptism and left Him before His crucifixion.

John declares, No! Jesus is the Christ, and Jesus is God the Son. He was so BEFORE His baptism. The baptism only testified to the reality. And He remained Jesus Christ through His ministry on to His crucifixion, burial, and resurrection.

The Spirit of truth adds His witness. His testimony agrees with that of the historical events of Jesus' baptism and crucifixion. He visibly descended on Jesus at His baptism like a dove. John the Baptist bore witness to it.

Jesus is the Anointed One, anointed with the Holy Spirit of God without measure. The Spirit led Him and empowered Him throughout His ministry.

Romans 1:4

And was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord.

The Spirit was involved in His resurrection, and the Spirit testifies to the world of their sin of not believing in Jesus, of righteousness,

and of judgment. He empowered the early church to be bold in their witness to the gospel of Christ, as the book of Acts records. He testifies not only externally to the true identity and mission of Jesus Christ, but also internally within our hearts and minds leading us to believe in Him.

1 John 5:6

The Spirit is the truth.

Reminds us of the way Jesus introduced the coming Holy Spirit to His disciples:

John 16:13-14

13 When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. **14** He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

Gnosticism has not been the only false teaching that rejected God's testimony to Jesus Christ.

- In the second century, Marcion taught that the God of the Old Testament was not the same God who sent Jesus into the world in the NT.
- In the third century, Arius of Alexandria taught that the Son of God was not eternal but was just a created being

(same falsehood the Jehovah's Witnesses teach today).

- In the seventh century Islam declared that Jesus did not die on the cross and was not the Son of God. Some Muslims teach that it was actually Judas that died on the cross, not Jesus.
- Mormonism teaches that Jesus was the spirit-brother of Satan in heaven, was born as normal human, and eventually became a god—and that we can achieve the same status of deity.
- Liberal Christianity teaches that Jesus was nothing more than a good man whose example we should follow.

(Summary from JD Crowley, *True Religion and Counterfeit Religion*, 100-101)

Any teaching that denies the real humanity of Jesus Christ, or the real deity of Jesus Christ, or the effective redemption of Jesus Christ on the cross, or the physical resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead rejects the established historical testimony of the water, the blood, and the Spirit. They all agree. You cannot pick and choose.

To reject this three-fold witness is to remove any hope we have of salvation from sin and death through Christ Jesus.

Worse yet, such false teaching attacks the integrity of God Himself.

Christianity is not just faith in an idea, a philosophy, a code of ethics, or a set of ceremonies.

It is faith in Jesus Christ as verified by historical events and firsthand testimony.

If you refuse to believe what will you do with the testimony? Like ignoring all the evidence in a court of law and then saying there is none.

In the face of all the evidence, are you willing to engage in such a high stakes gamble risking your very life and eternal destiny?

2. The Supreme Integrity of God as Witness (9-10)

⁹ If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater, for this is the testimony of God that he has borne concerning his Son.

If we would accept the testimony of three human witnesses in a court of law, how much more the testimony of God?

C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*: nearly everything we believe is on the basis of testimony we count reliable.

God the Father testified audibly to Jesus as His Son at His baptism, at the mount of Transfiguration, and shortly before His crucifixion.

Matthew 17:5

He (Peter) was still speaking when, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him."

John 12:27-29

²⁷ "Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? But for this purpose I have come to this hour.

²⁸ Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven: "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again." ²⁹ The crowd that stood there and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, "An angel has spoken to him."

Jesus Himself talks about God the Father's testimony regarding himself.

John 5:31-40

³¹ If I alone bear witness about myself, my testimony is not true. ³² There is another who bears witness about me, and I know that the testimony that he bears about me is true.

³³ You sent to John, and he has borne witness to the truth. ³⁴ Not that the testimony that I receive is from man, but I say these things so that you may be saved. ³⁵ He was a burning and shining lamp, and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light. ³⁶ But the testimony that I have is greater than that of John. For the works that the Father has given

me to accomplish, the very works that I am doing, bear witness about me that the Father has sent me. ³⁷ And the Father who sent me has himself borne witness about me. His voice you have never heard, his form you have never seen, ³⁸ and you do not have his word abiding in you, for you do not believe the one whom he has sent. ³⁹ You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, ⁴⁰ yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.

¹⁰ Whoever believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself. 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.

Believes in the Son of God—literally, is believing (ongoing) into the Son of God. Reliance—“getting in the boat not just believing there is a boat”

Has the testimony in himself—the Holy Spirit who indwells every true believer in Christ not only convinces the believer in his heart that these things are true, but displays His power in the believer’s life. He’s been doing so for 20 centuries.

Not to believe into Jesus the Son of God is not to believe God Himself. He has testified about who Jesus is.

If you refuse to believe, you are calling God a liar. Unbelief is not just a tragedy; it's a sin against God that dishonors Him and His character.

Satan is the father of lies, not God. A god who is a liar is not God—at least, not the God of the Bible.

If you never believe, what will you answer to God?

Richard Dawkins: “Why did you keep yourself so hidden?” A dishonest answer. God has made Himself known. He has given us ample testimony.

3. The Divine Promise of Eternal Life through the Son (11-12)

¹¹ And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. ¹² Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.

It is impossible to have eternal life apart from having the Son of God through your faith in Him. It is impossible not to have eternal life if you have the Son.

What is clear here is that no one achieves eternal life by his own effort and merits. It is a gift. This undeserved gift is yours only through Christ. Further, it is not just a "someday" gift. If you have Christ now, you have eternal life now. God's life has been given to you already. It is your present possession. It is already at work in you, transforming you at the core of who you are and flowing out to all that you say and do. And it will never end. It is eternal because God is eternal. You are safe forever.

How do you lay hold of this eternal life? You must receive the testimony, the witness of God to who Jesus Christ is and what Jesus Christ has done.

Testimony/Witness → Belief/Faith → Life

"The way to life is faith, and the way to faith is testimony." John Stott

Romans 10:17

So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

In Romans 10 Paul goes on to ask essentially, "How will they hear if there is no one to tell them?"

The fact is, Jesus Christ passed the job of bearing witness to His followers. "You shall be my witnesses."

We are to pass on to others the testimony God has given regarding Jesus Christ. He has given us all we need to be able to do so: historical evidence and the Holy Spirit to convince and to empower.

To whom are you testifying regarding Jesus Christ?

Conclusion

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Closing Song: God, the Uncreated One

Discussion Questions

1. What are some reasons Jesus' baptism was unique?
2. What are reasons Jesus' crucifixion was unique?
3. How did these two historical events, one at the beginning and one at the end of His public earthly ministry, mark Him as the Son of God and the Savior of the world?

4. What are some ways the Holy Spirit has borne testimony regarding Jesus both in the first century and throughout church history to this day?
5. Why does the gospel fall apart if we deny the full humanity of Jesus, the full deity of Jesus, the messianic identity of Jesus, or the redemptive success of Jesus at the cross and the tomb?
6. Why does it belittle God if we reject what He has testified to and revealed?
7. God has borne testimony that He has given us life through His Son. What does this testimony tell you about God's heart and the accessibility of eternal life?
8. What does "having the Son" (1 John 5:12) mean doctrinally and experientially?